

The Peculiar Conundrum



Matt Erickson

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By:

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To my loving wife, Pam; for all her love and support.



Ephrata, Washington

Chapter 1

“Could this be it?” Brandon Crawford asked himself, eagerly anticipating his grandson’s first goal of the soccer season.

Zane Crawford had freed himself from the pack; the only thing standing between him and a goal was the Goalie.

Zane faked a high-powered kick towards the widest side of the net. Right when the Goalie committed himself to the intercept, Zane pivoted and kicked the ball to the narrow side of the net.

“Score!” Brandon Crawford yelled enthusiastically as the ball passed between the goal posts. He threw back his elbow and pumped his clenched fist, shouting, “Yes!”

“Hey, Buddy, watch it!” said the knobby-kneed spectator sitting behind Brandon. “You almost took out my knee.”

“Sorry,” Brandon said, holding his tongue. A lesser man would have pointed out that his elbow wouldn’t have gotten so close if the knee hadn’t been stuck in his back all afternoon.

Few could blame Brandon for his spirited support of his family and soccer, a sport that ran deep in the Crawford family’s veins.

Brandon's son, Conner (Zane's dad), was the team's coach. The family business, Crawford Shoes, sponsored the team.

But, the Crawford family's most sacred connection to the game stemmed from their revered ancestor, Fred. Family lore spoke of Fred Crawford creating the game of soccer centuries ago in Beaumont, after witnessing the brutality of a 17th Century Old World Football Championship and vowing to offer up a sane alternative.

Old World football—the game played with an oval ball that players were allowed to touch with their hands—turned many men's stomachs.

While seasonal play was rough, the final playoff game of the football season was downright ghastly. The rules that offered players protection during the regular football season were there suspended, culminating in one final blood-match to the finish. Players fought to the death, and the last player standing amidst the carnage was crowned Sports Commissioner of his native homeland.

The Old World football games of Beaumont, Fremont, Gardenia and Sheridan were defended in principle because they prevented frequent wars between the four countries.

After the Championship games had been instituted, quarrels were typically settled on the field without involving their armies.

Damage was limited to players who sought the ultimate glory of serving in the highest civil office in the lands. Besides, as supporters argued, the games were spectacular sources of revenue.

Mass ticket sales, hefty advertising royalties, and extensive gambling revenue combined to make the high-stakes games wildly profitable ventures.

Hearing cheers as the game clock ran out of time a few minutes later, Brandon's attention snapped back to 2016—his grandson's team had won.

"Well played, Zane," said Brandon's wife, Lauren, as eleven-year-old Zane ran up to the family with the boundless energy of an adolescent.

"Thanks, Grams," Zane said appreciatively. "But, I can't wait for Cousin Billy's game this afternoon. I want to play like him some day."

Cousin Billy was actually his father's cousin, not his own, even though Zane and Billy were closer in age than Conner and Billy.

"Keep on improving and you will!" Brandon assured his grandson. "That was a great goal, by the way; you really faked out the Goalie."

Zane was actually shaping up to be an even better player than Billy, a Junior at the University of Prescott.

Prescott was one of the 13 franchises of Aminica; known collectively as the United Franchises of Aminica. Hundreds of years earlier, the franchises had been colonies of Beaumont.

“Say, Dad,” Conner said, as Brandon helped him take down the goal nets. “Zane is learning early Aminican history in school. He thinks it’s so cool that he’s related to the inventor of soccer. But, he’s heartbroken that people now only play his favorite sport in vacant fields and derelict warehouses. Meanwhile, he sees football being played in the old grand soccer stadiums.

“He keeps asking why soccer is no longer played in the United Franchises league. I don’t know what to tell him.”

“Now you know how I felt when you asked me the same questions when you were his age,” Brandon said, recalling twenty-year-old events.

“You get much of the credit, Conner—or the blame, depending who you ask—for inspiring me to spend thirty years of my life searching for the answer to those questions. You were kicking a soccer ball ever since you learned to walk. I knew someday you’d ask the same questions I had when I as a teenager.”

“So, you’ll talk to Zane when you get a chance?” Conner asked, listening with half an ear, as he’d been hearing about Aminican history from his father his whole life.

“Sure,” Brandon answered. “I’d be honored. We have some time before we need to leave for Billy’s game. I’ll talk to Zane now.”

As a child, Brandon first felt drawn to soccer by his family lineage, feeling a direct kinship through his ancestors. Now, he felt duty-bound to restore his favorite sport to its original limelight for the sake of his offspring.

Studying history became increasingly important to Brandon. He sought to learn how the country founded upon sports freedom and soccer ever became the place where soccer was thrown into the backseat while football was thrust into the spotlight.

Brandon and Zane went for a walk, delving deep into the past while Lauren, Conner and the others dealt with the present.

“Your dad tells me you have been asking him a lot of questions about Aminica and soccer lately,” Brandon said. “Is that right?”

“Yeah,” Zane said. “I don’t get it. Either my history teacher has it all wrong, or our country is nothing like it was when it was founded.”

“Nothing like when *she* was founded,” Brandon said, not afraid to use the historic female gender pronoun.

“Huh?” Zane asked, wondering what his grandfather meant.

“In my day,” Brandon said, “we always used a female pronoun when referring to a country or a ship. It was meant to show respect, even a certain amount of reverence.”

“You are so old-fashioned, Gramps,” Zane giggled, understanding his grandfather’s words but not really his point.

“To tell you the truth, Kiddo; I am not even sure what they teach you in schools these days,” Brandon said. “But, based on the questions you are asking about soccer, it looks like your teacher is probably giving it to you fairly straight.

“Undoubtedly, however, you are probably also getting a fair amount of politically-correct history. Examining history through the lens of today teaches kids to accept the present as, well, the way things are—the natural order of things. You’re indirectly pressured to see anything different from today as odd or improper. Some things—like soccer, however—were ‘right’ back then. It is the placing of football in the limelight today that is wrong, at least from the point-of-view of our Compact for the United Franchises of Aminica.

“As I said, when I was your age, I thought about soccer all the time. But, later I discovered girls. When I started dating your grandmother in high school, I forgot about everything else for quite a while.

“Then, those old questions I had years earlier started coming back to me after your father was born. They grew and festered as he got better at soccer as he aged.

“I must say, the Crawford family seems blessed with talent in this area. I thought your father had great skill—until I saw Billy play.

“And you, Zane—well, you’re giving Billy a real run for his money.

“Do you really think so, Gramps?” Zane asked, ever so curious, a large smile and twinkling eyes revealed his pleasure at hearing the highest compliment his grandfather could have given him.

“Yes, Zane,” Brandon answered. “I really think so. Of course, if you let up on your training, your natural talent won’t develop fully,” Brandon hastened to add. “A lot still depends upon you.

“Life may push you in another direction, Kiddo, away from soccer. And that is fine, if that is what you decide; it is your life to make of it what you want.”

Looking into Zane’s searching eyes, Brandon took a deep breath and dove back in, from the beginning. He began with the growing sports persecution in Beaumont, told of Fred Crawford’s grisly execution and then the Crawford family’s emigration to the New World three hundred years before.

Fred Crawford's wife and young children fled the Old World after Fred had been drawn to his place of execution by horse, hanged for treason until unconscious, revived, emasculated, disemboweled, beheaded and quartered.

Fred's crime worthy of that cruel if not then unusual punishment? He had committed the ultimate crime against football—he had offered up a competitive alternative.

Seeking refuge and a new chance at life, his grieving family understandably fled to Aminica.

Many of Fred's free-thinking sports devotees followed suit. They formed a mass exodus to the New World, leaving all ties to corruption and football as far behind them as possible.

Located some eight hundred nautical miles southwest of Beaumont in the Jagged Sea, Aminica was first colonized by fishermen from Beaumont a century earlier.

Aminica—whose name is pronounced with an emphasis on the only long vowel, the second “i”—quickly became known as an independent-minded country.

From the start, Aminica went her own way. She steadfastly refused to field a team for the International Football Championships.

Without citizens to spare, she didn't want to see her best citizens maimed or slaughtered every year in gruesome games.

Corruption was not tolerated in the New World. Early Aminicans despised payoffs, "protection money," and back-room deals for those who offered "special access" to games and/or the outcomes.

The absence of violence and corruption spurred many people from the Old World to brave the wilds of the New. Laws were few and slight because aims were similar. Strict, rigid rules weren't much needed to govern a productive, peace-loving people.

"...But, like so many good things, Aminica was seen as a threat to the Old Ways. Say, it looks like your grandmother is waving us over," Brandon said suddenly, interrupting himself as he glanced across the field. "We'd best be getting back, Zane. How about we continue this discussion another time?"

Zane's face was unusually pensive as he and Brandon headed back to the rest of the group. Zane didn't understand the terms his grandfather had used to describe Fred Crawford's execution, but he understood enough to know the event hadn't been good.

"We have to get going, Brandon," Lauren said, looking at her watch, as the teacher and student came back into the fold. "We don't want to be late for Billy's game."

Most of the extended family would be there.

Brandon's older and younger brothers, Barry and Darren, their wives, and many of the various children and grandchildren would be attending.

Barry, Brandon and Darren were partners in the third-generation family business, Crawford Shoes.

Their premier shoe, The Playmaker Elite, had been the shoe of choice for soccer players for as long as anyone could remember.

Between their family history and business ties, it was no wonder the Crawfords' lives still revolved around soccer. Even though dwindling numbers of their fellow countrymen felt similarly, their fervent love of soccer continued unabated.

As Brandon and Lauren drove to the remote field an hour away, Brandon's mind began to wander. Lauren was all too familiar with her husband's tendency to become lost in thought anytime a conversation lulled beyond a few moments.

Brandon pondered how Aminica had been originally founded upon sports freedom and soccer, but soccer had been mysteriously driven from the spotlight a century later, well over 100 years ago.

It was odd, but Aminica was seemingly repeating again her colonial history—her decade just before she declared independence. Two hundred-plus years later, however, she tragically seemed stuck there.

The Aminican colonies had blossomed in the early 17th Century, on the search for a better tomorrow.

The colonies became a lighthouse offering a Beacon of Safety to lowly Old World residents, promising freedom and shining all the way to that safe-haven, far away from the ominous storms that continuously plagued the Old World.

Aminica's life, liberty and free pursuit of sports easily trumped plunder, corruption and payoffs for a swelling number of oppressed masses.

Word of the New World soon spread far and wide. Aminica became the embodiment of hope and prosperity, beckoning ever-greater numbers of hard-working people who dared to answer her fateful call.

Left to their own devices, the young colonies prospered.

Their growing wealth grew great enough to entice, but not yet sufficient to easily defend. Aminica's growing wealth sadly served as an enticing morsel to raid by the "mother country."

In 1765, Beaumont, overburdened by corruption and desperate for revenue, reversed her initial course. Beaumont severed her former "hands-off" colonial policy and unilaterally imposed taxes upon her Aminican colonists, against their will and without their consent.

The Ticket Tax (as the levies laid upon Aminican sporting events and sporting goods became known), enraged the liberty-minded Aminicans, as it signified that they no longer held any say over their own affairs.

To avoid paying the Ticket Tax on soccer, the games went underground. In retaliation, Beaumont forced Old World football upon the colonists.

The colonists endured a decade of increasingly harsh, colonial rule—and football—before declaring their independence in 1776.

Aminica's July 4, 1776 Freedom Proclamation contained a long list of the Aminicans' many grievances with Beaumont. It took seven arduous years of war for Aminica to free herself from those grievances, from Beaumont's harsh grip.

But, oddly enough, the hardships Aminicans endured under Beaumont for the decade following 1765, served as but a prelude of many of the same issues that Aminicans would endure under their own government a century later. This time, however, the issues would not last only a decade or two, but increased unceasingly over 150 years.

In an attempt to forever expunge the corruption that had found temporary refuge in fertile Aminica, Aminica's Founders after the War for Freedom used their experiences and knowledge of history to charter a new system of sports authority.

In 1787, the Founders drafted a new Compact to take the bold steps necessary to ensure no petty tyrant could ever again gain sufficient power to replace or subvert their beloved game of soccer.

The new sports authority was organized under the Compact for the United Franchises of Aminica, and began in 1789. The Framers used their Compact to chain and bind soccer as the Supreme Sport of the Land within a written Rulebook.

The Compact of 1789 was, first and foremost, all about the ability of the Aminican people to support their favored sport.

Known informally on the street as *The Soccer Rulebook*, the Compact described the layout of the soccer field, the various player positions, and, importantly, the sacred rules of the game.

And, the most important rule of play was that no player but the Goalie could touch the soccer ball with his hands after the ball was put in play. This rule was seen as the signature provision to keep soccer from deteriorating into the violence of football.

The Soccer Rulebook created three separate organizational structures to support the game.

First was Management, which consisted of General Managers and Head Coaches. Each franchise elected its two General Managers for six-year terms, Head Coaches for two-year terms.

Members of Management met in Aminica's District Seat, called the District of Colivera. Their job was to support the game of soccer by performing their duties, which were specified in The Soccer Rulebook.

Head Coaches were more numerous, serving as the visible faces of the team. They maintained close relationships with media and helped draw spectators to the game by their charisma alone, if necessary.

Head Coaches typically left the actual coaching of the teams to the Assistant Coaching Staff they hired.

Besides working with Head Coaches to support the game, General Managers also confirmed senior civil service staff who were nominated by the Sports Commissioner.

The second branch was headed by the Sports Commissioner, the highest civil servant in the land.

Referees made up the third branch of sports authority in the United Franchises of Aminica.

The next few generations began to succeed as no previous generation could imagine. All the hard work, sacrifices, and blood of the Founders paid great dividends in freedom and prosperity.

But, good times also began to grow the seeds of turmoil, as later generations took their situation for granted.

And, all too soon, football and corruption began making substantial inroads into the country founded upon freedom and soccer. In time, soccer became almost nonexistent in the land which first treasured it—freedom and prosperity diminishing simultaneously.

Brandon and Lauren arrived at the remote soccer field and made their way towards a set of impromptu bleachers that appeared none-too-steady.

“Hi, guys!” Natalie said when they were within earshot. Natalie was Barry’s wife and also Lauren’s cousin.

Lauren sat down next to Natalie and they began catching up on the week’s events.

“Who’s coming with me to grab some food?” Barry asked.

Two of the younger children and three of the older grandchildren went with Barry to put their muscles to good use.

The group came back with the food and drink just as the teams were finishing up their stretching exercises and warm-up drills.

The game was well under way by the time they finished eating. At half-time, the score was against Billy and his teammates, 2-to-0.

Billy's team stepped up the pressure in the second half, but time was running out.

As the team worked the ball towards the opposition's goal, Billy broke free on the opposite side of the field.

A teammate kicked the ball to Billy, who immediately brought it under control.

Working the ball forward five more yards, Billy planted his left foot firmly in the grass and drove his right foot through the soccer ball with all the concentrated might he could muster.

The ball responded accordingly, being propelled powerfully forward toward the goal 15 yards away.

But, the power which Billy's had used to kick the ball was more than he could fully control. The leg continued further in an arc than it should have, which caused his body to twist unnaturally over his left leg that remained fixed in the grass—Billy heard the knee “pop” and felt it give way.

Tumbling to the ground, Billy lay writhing in pain. He never saw his well-placed ball pass just beyond the Goalie's reach for a goal.

“Billy!” Julia cried out in a shrill tone, knowing her son was injured, though not yet realizing how badly.

“That has got to hurt,” Darren said while watching his only son involuntarily contort his face in great pain.

“Girls,” Julia said, trying to steady her shaking voice as tears involuntarily welled up in her eyes. “Gather your things; we need to take your brother to the doctor.”

“We can take the girls,” Natalie said, knowing a hospital visit could drag on for hours, as she watched the assistant coach stabilize Billy’s knee before attempting to move him.

“Oh, could you?” Julia asked, looking to Darren, who nodded in agreement.

Although the game was not yet over, it certainly was for Billy, Darren and Julia.

There was less reason to watch the game without Billy playing, but the remainder of the family stayed until the end out of respect for the team and especially for the game.

Without any more goals, Bill’s team lost, 2-to-1.

Chapter 2

Barry and Natalie took their nieces home while Brandon and Lauren went to the hospital. The other adult children took home the rest of the family members.

“How’s Billy doing?” Brandon asked after arriving in the emergency center’s waiting room.

“The staff just took him back to get an MRI,” Julia said. “The doctors aren’t saying much until they see the scan.”

“I’m sorry, Julia,” Lauren said, knowing it was difficult for a mother to worry about an injured child, even a grown one.

“The assistant coach thought Billy must have torn his anterior cruciate ligament and probably his medial collateral too,” Darren said. “He’s not sure if the meniscus is involved.

“He admitted he saw surgery in Billy’s future, or at least extensive rehab. Either way, he said Billy is assuredly out the rest of the season.”

After a few moments of silence, Darren shook his head and said quietly, almost to himself, “All his training and hard work...”

“Too bad soccer isn’t still played professionally,” Brandon mused. “It would give Billy a greater incentive to get his knee back into shape. A strong financial motive would undoubtedly inspire his rehab.”

“So many in our family would have had a decent chance at making a professional team,” Darren said wistfully. “Like Conner and Billy.”

“I know I had difficulty answering Conner’s questions about why his favorite sport wasn’t professionally played anymore,” Brandon said, reflecting back decades.

“His questions got harder as he grew older and learned more history. Reading about the big soccer games played in the old Grand Stadium really inspired him, but the contradiction between the past and the present bothered him a great deal.

“Even worse,” Brandon sighed. “I still don’t know how to answer those questions now that Zane is asking, even after studying this topic for nearly three decades.

“How, exactly, did football supporters ever get the upper hand in a country explicitly founded upon sports freedom and soccer? I just don’t get it.”

Brandon's vow to learn how football replaced soccer as the preeminent game in Aminica never wavered nor waned. He just wasn't making any apparent progress.

He couldn't get his head wrapped around how football was now being played under the same Compact that specified the rules only for soccer.

Soccer rules for the big, Union-wide games had been laid out in the Compact for the United Franchises of Aminica.

In contrast, rules for baseball, basketball and football were detailed within each of the franchises' individual Compacts.

Of course, the rules of each franchise could not extend beyond its borders.

Since each franchise had its own, often-varied rules for baseball, basketball, and football, those sports could only be played within that same franchise, between local teams of different boroughs. In contrast, soccer was the national sport where franchises would compete against one another throughout the land.

Now, however, football was being played nationally in soccer's place, while soccer itself had altogether vanished from the official sports scene.

As a college student, Brandon hadn't been interested in sports politics. But, once he began working in the family business, he soon realized the extent politics affected the bottom line.

He just never could understand how traditional soccer ever fell from grace.

In theory, traditional soccer should still be played throughout the country in the big leagues, since it was enshrined in the United Franchises Compact. But, somehow, soccer traditionalists only seemed to lose precious political ground every year.

In an attempt to remain politically relevant, traditional soccer proponents concentrated on the "here and now," already giving up on everything they had lost yesterday.

Deep in his core, Brandon knew he could never surrender to two centuries of constitutional abuse and neglect. His gut told him that it was wrong to accept things the way they were, instead of the way they should be by the highest rules of the land. And, he watched as soccer progressively lost more of its proud heritage year-after-year.

Never could Brandon accept the *status quo* as the proper starting point for needed change. He could not shake his gut feeling that soccer traditionalists were missing something profound, something basic, something rudimentary.

He believed only strict adherence to the fundamental principles of the Compact could ever restore traditional soccer to its proper place—being played nationally in front of cheering crowds.

He resolved to continue searching for the missing link that would help him understand the incomprehensible—how the actions of sports officials seemed to violate founding principles without repercussion, even though those original principles had never been repealed or replaced.

Most people who knew Brandon came to see him as an unrealistic dreamer—an idealist lost in a pragmatic world.

Brandon's brothers, however, joined him in his study of Aminican history whenever they could. The three brothers fervently sought to understand how the country ever got into her present sorry mess.

"How's Billy?" Natalie asked when Julia stopped by to pick up the girls.

"The doctors said the damage is worse than they hoped. Even the meniscus is involved," Julia answered, shaking her head and grimacing.

"Billy's best chance at healing is surgery, and fast.

"If he just wants to get his knee back into decent shape for a normal, active lifestyle, they think extensive rehabilitation may work.

“But, even then, they’re not ruling out surgery down the road.

“Darren stayed at the hospital. He’s hoping to bring Billy home soon. In the meantime, he wanted to be there in case Billy wanted to talk about his long-term options.”

Barry cleared his throat. “Darren knows Natalie and I would like Billy to join Crawford Shoes whenever he’s ready,” he said gently. “I know Brandon and Lauren feel the same way.”

“What a relief!” Julia said. “I wish it wasn’t under these circumstances. But, I will make sure Billy understands that he has options,” she said, looking up at Barry with a sad smile.

“Brandon, Darren and I have always taken succession planning seriously. We try to give it the attention it deserves,” Barry said.

“Darren knows we are all on the same page. Family comes first, the business second. When we can meld those two objectives together, even better.

“Plus, Billy would be great at expanding our market share. He would make a fantastic spokesman for our target audience.

“He could travel the country, attend soccer games, answer questions, and hand out giveaways. You know, all the meet-and-greet kind of stuff. He has just the right personality for it.”

When Monday morning rolled around, the Crawford brothers got back to work. Billy decided to go through with surgery, hoping against hope that he would be able to play soccer again after rehab. He figured it made sense to heal as best he could, given the circumstances.

Billy's injury brought thoughts of the future even further into the minds of the Crawford brothers. Naturally, the future of soccer rested at the forefront.

Internal research showed if soccer could be restored to its former glory, Crawford Shoes could grow 500% in the next ten years.

Instead of pursuing the impossible, however, pragmatic friends suggested the brothers accept the *status quo* and simply expand into the lucrative market for football shoes, which enjoyed a large and ready demand.

The brothers dismissed such thoughts as soon as they heard them. They had no desire to be the generation that sold out the three-century-strong family heritage or the three-generation-long family business.

There was only one realistic path available to the Crawford brothers, the one that paired a financial motive to their family history and sense of patriotic duty.

Understanding how the game of soccer ever fell from grace became a growing obsession for these three middle-aged brothers.

If they could find a way to rejuvenate American soccer, not only could their business flourish, but, importantly, the country could prosper and their most famous ancestor would again get his proper due.

Somehow, though, it was as if soccer was becoming a dirty word, a game whose proud heritage now only seemed to bring it further disrepute.

It was as if the Compact for the United Franchises of America had been turned upside-down and wrung inside-out.

At lunch, Brandon ate in his office while he pondered how the Framers intended to protect and enshrine the game of soccer.

In the Compact of 1789, the Framers made sure that no person empowered by and under that charter could change the rules of the game.

Neither the powerful Sports Commissioner nor Referees had any role in formal changes to the game.

While two-thirds of Management could propose an addendum or multiple addenda to make a change, only the separate franchises could vote to approve them into existence.

Approving a change to the United Franchises Compact required the specific affirmation of three-fourths of all of the franchises.

Since there were 13 separate franchises, it took 10 of them to approve changes. Any four franchises—even the smallest and least significant—could refuse to ratify an addendum and prevent the game from changing.

This most important formal principle—no person empowered under the Compact was able to change the Compact or change the firm rules of soccer—had somehow been subverted, however.

It was as if the foxes who constantly raided the henhouse were now in charge of making the henhouse's rules. And, without surprise, the foxes came out pretty well, while the hens suffered terribly.

While not even members of Management were empowered to change the rules, they were nevertheless empowered to enact measures in support of the games.

For instance, while The Soccer Rulebook set out the field dimensions and the rules of the game, members of Management could create rules for preparing and selling foods in stadium commissaries.

Management could also determine the width of the field stripes, the striping material used, and how frequently the stripes would be applied.

Members of Management made biennial budget decisions, including approving stadium buildings designed under the watchful eye of the Commissioner.

Members of Management also approved game schedules proposed by the Commissioner, especially for the all-important playoff games.

The early Aminican playoff games were always national, never international. 1789's Aminica avoided the brutality of the Old World and continued to boycott the ruthless International football games.

Critics called her "isolationistic" for refusing to send a team to play in the International football games.

The truth was, since football was originally played only within individual franchises, early on there was not even any Union-wide football team that could even be sent to the international games.

It was no coincidence that the Compact's Framers intentionally made it difficult for Aminica to join in the brutal Old World games.

The idea behind their thought process was that the international games would only offer foreign corruption a foothold in the young country.

The Aminican Sports Commissioner, popularly elected to his post in Aminica, was charged with preserving, protecting and defending the Compact, keeping the rules of soccer inviolate.

The Sports Commissioner, often an expert soccer player in his own right, oversaw senior staff. Together, their responsibility was to keep United Franchises stadiums running smoothly. Senior staff ran divisions within parameters set by Management.

For example, the Director of Commissary Affairs oversaw the cafeterias and food stands. The Commissary Director made sure that procedures set by Management were followed for buying, storing, preparing, cooking, baking, grilling, and serving the foods sold at the games.

The Director of Playing Fields watched over the growing and cutting of the grass according to the direction of Management.

The Soccer Rulebook outlined the process for appointing Referees and detailed how they must enforce the rules. Referees were nominated by the Commissioner, but needed confirmation by the General Managers before they could be hired. Referees didn't have specific term lengths—they served as long as they behaved themselves.

Like the Commissioner, his officers and staff, Referees could be impeached by Head Coaches. The usual causes were corruption, fixing the game, or displaying repeated and grossly unfair favoritism in their calls.

Upon conviction by General Managers, impeached officers and Referees would be removed from their positions and might even be forever barred from the fields, stadiums, and games.

Every officer from the Commissioner to the lowliest staff member was directly or indirectly bound by oath to support the Compact for the United Franchises of Aminica.

Since members of Management and United Franchises officers were unable to change the rules to give themselves more power, The Soccer Rulebook guaranteed that the whole could never consume the parts—meaning, the United Franchises could never overpower and consume the individual franchises that made up the free-spirited country.

But, despite the Framer's best intentions, football began a troubling trend towards supremacy in the middle of the 19th Century.

Football's growing prominence during that period of ascension shocked many Aminicans living during that disconcerting era.

By 2016, however, no living Aminican was any longer shocked that football had become the dominant sport of the land.

The modern games reenacted scenes similar to the colonial era, when Beaumont had forced football on Aminicans in the decade before independence.

Throughout much of the 20th Century and into the 21st—like the era between 1765 and 1776—soccer games were no longer officially sanctioned anywhere in all of Aminica. The game was long gone from the United Franchises League. Soccer wasn't played officially even in schools or colleges either, just in underground leagues on crudely-lined fields.

The reason this was so surprising, of course, was because soccer was still specifically named the “Supreme Sport of the Land” in the 1789 Compact for the United Franchises of Aminica.

No pertinent rules of the Compact had ever been formally repealed or replaced. No regulation forbidding the play of traditional soccer existed anywhere.

Yet every person or company owning a stadium or ballfield knew they would be blacklisted from all further favor if they allowed soccer in their stadiums.

“Anything you need, Brandon, before I take off to the trustee meeting at church?” Barry asked late Monday, poking his head into Brandon's office.

It was common for Barry to leave work an hour early every other Monday so he could grab a quick meal at home before heading off to the twice-monthly meetings.

“If you have a couple of minutes, we could go over sales projections,” Brandon said. “Or, we can wait until morning if you prefer.”

“I’ve been waiting for those numbers—I’d like to see them,” Barry said. “If Conner or Billy are coming on board anytime soon, it would be great to know if we can pay them.”

“Yes,” Brandon said, laughing. “It seems prudent to know if we can honor our commitments.”

Barry quickly scanned the sheet of sales estimates that Brandon handed him, leaning against the doorway. While Barry was reading, Brandon finished his invoicing, each scratch of pen on paper confirming the cash flowing in and out of the business.

“If these numbers are right,” Barry said, glancing up from the paperwork, “it sure looks like we could use some extra help in nearly every department.”

“Yes,” Brandon said. “It’s tricky to forecast sales, but these numbers indicate we’ll have a very good year.”

“I have to admit though,” Brandon said, scratching his head and looking slightly abashed as he otherwise hastened to reassure Barry, “the hard data doesn’t completely reflect the actual numbers on that paper. I increased the projections based upon my gut instinct, which might be wrong. But, even if actual sales end up closer to the original forecast, we’ll still end up doing really well.

“So, now you are staking your reputation on your gut?” Barry asked, thinking privately that abandoning the wisdom of objectivity was foolish.

“Evidently so,” Brandon answered. “But, I think we’ll do even better than the numbers show on that paper you’re holding.”

“Has Darren seen this?” Barry asked, holding up the paper.

“No, not yet,” Brandon answered. “He’ll be in and out this week because of Billy’s surgery.”

“We should sit down and go over this estimate in detail, soon,” Barry said. “We’ll have to plan really well if our numbers end up being anywhere near these figures.”

“Okay,” Brandon agreed, as Barry left the factory for his meeting.

Brandon worked for another hour before calling it a night himself. He left the office exhausted but with the satisfying heaviness that filled him after a productive day's work.

The brothers met on Friday to examine the sales forecasts, since Darren couldn't fit it in his schedule earlier in the week.

"Just to make sure you know, Darren; Brandon padded the sales estimates above what the hard figures showed," Barry said.

"In other words," Brandon interjected, "Barry isn't convinced we will do as well as I think."

"I have to say," Darren answered, "I agree with Brandon on this one. I'm pumped about our new shoe and I think it will go gangbusters."

The brothers were getting ready to release a new shoe, codenamed "The Marsupial" after its leather—kangaroo.

The unique thing about kangaroo leather was that the grain all ran in the same direction. Even when the leather was thinned to make it light and pliable, it retained most of its original strength.

The Crawford brothers planned on releasing The Marsupial in early summer to get their line in full swing for soccer's fall season.

Production would begin as soon as the chemistry department finished formulating the waterproofing process.

Since the chemistry process wouldn't directly affect the regular production line, the line was already being changed over without waiting for a "go ahead" from chemistry.

This meant the brothers were able to implement the new equipment changes without the usual rush. The whole crew was enjoying a seamless transition during a notoriously hectic time.

Maximizing production while minimizing strain was an important value at Crawford Shoes, in line with its motto "Walking, Working and Playing Together."

By effectively integrating each part of their business into a more productive whole, their business was able to operate smoothly. It was this effective integration of separate components for a more productive whole that the brothers sought to restore to Aminican sports.

A big part of the family's success came from the division of labor, so the brothers didn't figuratively (or literally) step on one another's shoes.

Brandon was the people-person, overseeing sales and the office. Barry supervised the production line and inventory. Darren oversaw shipping and equipment maintenance.

When any part of their system needed to change, the brothers worked together to integrate new processes. Crawford Shoes was effective because each brother was responsible for a part of it, but worked together to make necessary changes and implement their overall goals as a company.

“The chemistry department leaders estimate another two weeks before they can wrap things up,” Barry said, as the meeting started winding down.

“Two weeks, two weeks; it’s always ‘two weeks,’” Darren sighed in mild frustration. “Do you think the waterproofing process will actually be ready for us in two weeks?”

“I think so,” Barry said. “The team is close. Personally, I think we’d be happy with the formulation we have right now, but chemistry is confident a few more tweaks will improve the formula.

“I think we should wait and see, since the department heads in chemistry seems so optimistic.”

“Another few weeks won't bother us in the long run,” Brandon concurred. “If there is a decent chance of making the formulation better, we should let them try.

“And, that delay means I have time to bring up succession planning.

“Conner is ready to come back to work here. He has gained valuable experience working in the busy football shoe industry. But, he'd much rather work in the sport he loves and join the family business.

“I would like to have him work with me, helping market and sell our new shoe. I think we could benefit from his fresh perspective.”

“In principle, I am all for it,” Barry said. “Of course, we need to work out the details.”

“Yes, of course,” Brandon said.

“However we go about it,” Darren said, “we should use the same strategies to bring other family members onboard.

“Billy and I have talked quite a bit lately, especially since his injury, about bringing him on after he finishes college next year.

“I asked if he wanted to start after graduation, but right now he thinks working for someone besides his father and uncles for a while, like Conner did, is a good idea.”

“It’s settled then? Conner comes on board as soon as he’s available?” Brandon asked, turning the conversation back to his present interest.

“Yes,” Barry said as Darren nodded in agreement.

The brothers continued to rough out a compensation package for Conner and began a discussion on buy-in/sell-out factors.

“We need to update the company’s balance sheet,” Barry said, bringing the meeting to an end.

A wide number of partnership issues remained before the next generation would be able to earn equity in the family company as a partner, but Conner was approved to come on board as a hired hand so that he could start gaining direct experience in the family business.

Brandon called Conner later that evening and told him the good news.

“Conner sounded excited,” Lauren said after her husband got off the phone. “At least, from what I could hear.”

“Yes,” Brandon answered, as they discussed the changes that could come from hiring Conner.

“Maybe the biggest change would be that we could finally go on a decent vacation, since Conner could fill in while we were gone,” Lauren said wistfully.

The couple was interrupted by a phone call from Natalie, the two cousins talked to finalize plans for dinner the following night.

Chapter 3

The Crawford families met at a local restaurant on Saturday to celebrate Billy's successful surgery. Billy arrived on crutches with his parents and sisters.

"Billy, you survived surgery!" Barry said, welcoming the recuperating kid to dinner.

"Yes," Billy answered ruefully. "I'm not in too much pain. Thankfully, I'm already off the strong stuff, just taking Ibuprofen now."

"The doctor expects a full recovery, so I'm hoping all the work ahead of me will be worth it."

Dinner went well, the family thankful for their health and happiness.

When the bill arrived, Darren asked, "Hey, Barry, are you springing for dinner? You are the last one still eating."

Barry hesitated, looking over at Brandon, noticing both of his younger brothers had already finished eating.

"You *are* the last one eating, Barry," Brandon said, implying Barry should pay the tab.

"Sure, why not?" Barry replied. "I got this."

Darren laughed, knowing all three of them would pay in the end, as Barry grabbed the family business's credit card from his wallet.

Eating quickly was a Crawford tradition. It avoided wasting time that could be spent working.

“Now listen, *boys*,” Natalie said as she emphasized the word “boys,” gently scolding the middle-aged men. “There’s no need to teach the next generation your bad habits, especially since this one causes indigestion. I thought you could act your age.”

“We are!” Darren said, feigning an old man with a crotchety demeanor, implying they had come full circle and were now reverting back to childish ways.

Barry laughed at his brother, until he glanced at his wife. “Ahem,” he said as he cleared his throat, trying his best to change the subject before getting in too much trouble. After a few moments of scrambling for a topic, Barry commented about how pleased he was that Billy seemed optimistic about his future, despite his injury.

The ability to look beyond soured circumstances of the present to see the promise of a great future was a vital skill in the brothers’ secondary venture, the one with nothing but decades of failure and frustration despite a great deal of study.

The families enjoyed one another’s company, but the line of people waiting for tables meant they shouldn’t overstay their welcome. They left after Barry paid the tab.

Brandon leaned back in his office chair during a Monday mid-afternoon lull the following week. With nothing urgent demanding his attention, he found himself thinking about the historical jurisdiction over sports.

Originally, one set of rules applied to soccer games throughout the Union, under the Compact for the United Franchises of Aminica. All other sports were played locally in the several franchises, each franchise with its own rules.

The reason the Framers divided it this way was to minimize corruption while retaining the independence of the franchises.

Making sure the whole was strong while the individual pieces remained independent was a delicate operation, but the Framers of the United Franchises Compact succeeded spectacularly—at least at first.

To unify the separate franchises, the Framers of the Compact provided written rules for soccer played throughout the Union.

This allowed the nation to pull together as one on its most important issue. Yet, since sports other than soccer were still being played under rules of the separate franchises, the franchises wouldn't lose their significance.

As the United Franchises Compact described the rules only for the game of soccer, it was rather short.

Each of the 13 separate franchises, however, had far longer Compacts. After all, each franchise Compact had to list rules for each competitive sport played therein—including baseball, basketball and football.

Of course, football in the American franchises was unlike Old World football. Early American football in the franchises was rough and aggressive, but never brutal or fatal.

Every borough of each franchise had its own team for each local sport. Those teams would only play against other local teams of and within their own franchise.

During those early days, baseball, basketball and football teams never played outside of their own franchise. It wasn't a lack of competitive spirit, but a result of design. After all, which rules of the game would be enforced if they were ever to play other franchises? The home team's or the visiting team's?

Playing under one or the other would invariably favor the team that was used to those rules.

Some of the discrepancies between different franchise's rules were significant enough to make games between franchises pointless.

For instance, in baseball, eleven franchises used 90-foot dimensions between the bases, but two franchises used 85.

In basketball, most franchises had five-man teams, but one allowed six. It would be ludicrous for a team used to relying on six members to play with one man missing from the court.

True, the franchises could have willingly adopted uniform rules. But, each franchise had valid historical reasons why its rules differed from the others. But, most importantly, the War for Freedom had been all about *self-rule*, not living under the dictates of some distant sports authority.

As much as Aminica was one country, it was still made up of 13 *separate* franchises. Separate rules were steeped in each franchise's unique history and not necessarily insignificant enough to change just to extend the game over greater distances.

Hundreds of years ago, there was no compelling need to conform, to be and think like everyone else. There was even ample reason to intentionally avoid it.

Back then, the Framers had said variety was “the spice of life.”

Differences between franchises provided a buffer of sorts, preventing harm from spreading throughout the Union.

If one franchise made a foolish or unethical rule for one of its local sports, its choice wouldn't affect the whole country.

While the most important reason for each franchise to hold tightly to its independence being self-rule, the second most important reason was to minimize corruption.

By dividing power among a multitude of separate hosts operating under differing rules, the Framers best minimized the chance for any outside group or political party to gain enough power to extend corruption far and wide.

Minimizing corruption best kept evil at bay, preventing a buildup of problems which historically led countries toward poverty, oppression and war.

Reasons such as these were certainly deemed ample to restrict play of local sports to each franchise.

Plus, the United Franchises Compact could always be changed through the addendum process, if need be.

For example, if proponents wanted to play football throughout the United Franchises, they could work to propose the necessary addenda that would list all the rules that would be needed for Union-wide football games.

If the addenda were ratified, franchises would be thereafter able to play football against other franchises throughout the Union.

Then, each franchise could compete against one another with their own football teams just like they did with soccer.

Including the ratification process in the Compact allowed new rules to be introduced and thoroughly discussed before being decided.

Only proposals with wide appeal would be approved.

But, football proponents had never succeeded with any formal attempts to even propose, let alone ratify any such addenda, at least by the year 2016.

For all practical matters, the United Franchises Compact of 1789 was unchanged. Reading the plain text easily showed to the common man that it strongly supported only traditional soccer. Of course, elitist sports officials and members of Management disagreed with that conclusion.

By the strict terms of the Sports Bill of Rights, any powers that the franchises did not give to the United Franchises were reserved to the respective franchises or left to the people themselves.

The 10th Addendum reserved all other sports (beyond United Franchises soccer) to the separate franchises, individually.

Yet, despite these inviolate principles, in 2016, the only game now all but prohibited was soccer. And, baseball, basketball, and football were presently played throughout the Union instead of only in the individual franchises.

Preventing people in power from changing the game had been the primary tool instituted to best ensure the New World wouldn't follow in the tragic footsteps of the Old.

Despite their best intentions and valiant efforts, however, the Framers failed to contain corruption over the long run.

Political corruption—the most destructive force after war—somehow discovered the necessary means to grow and prosper in the Land of Sports Freedom.

Chapter 4

Conner came on board after giving his old boss a month's notice. His new duties centered on promoting The Marsupial.

The shoe's name didn't go over well with the public; more and more people began calling it the "Roo Shoe."

With Conner taking on some of Brandon's "real" work around the office, Brandon found the time to work on several new organizations for the family's side "business," while Conner readied their websites.

"How is the roll-out of the new shoe going?" Lauren asked her son when he stopped by for a quick visit several months later.

"Great!" Conner was thrilled to say. "I've been getting sensational feedback from players."

"I'm curious to read the slant of the trade magazines and sporting journals. I think the first review is supposed to hit the stands next week."

"Your father says that you are taking your new responsibilities in stride. I'm proud of you, son," Lauren smiled fondly.

"Thanks, Mom," Conner said. "Truth is, I think work is going well, but I'm not entirely sure what Dad or my uncles think."

“Be patient,” Lauren said. “Your father and his brothers have been working with one another their whole lives. They have their respective roles down pat so that they don’t need to check in too often. If you need something, you’ll probably have to figure it out on your own or specifically ask for help.

“You know I’m not saying anything against you, with that comment. Right?”

“I’m not offended, Mom,” Conner said.

“I know you are confident in your abilities,” Lauren said. “I just wanted to make sure you know it’s okay to take some risks and make decisions yourself, but that you can ask for help if you need it.”

“Say, Mom,” Conner said, in the casual tone and manner of someone whose next words would reveal the purpose of his visit... “Why don’t we all go out to dinner Saturday night?”

“I don’t think we have anything going,” Lauren admitted, wondering what Conner wanted. “Dinner sounds great.”

They set the time and place before Conner left.

Brandon arrived home fifteen minutes later.

“You just missed Conner,” Lauren said, greeting her husband with an affectionate kiss. “He invited us to dinner, Saturday night.”

“Did he have anything particular on his mind?” Brandon asked, before adding, “It’s not like he invites us to dinner often.”

“He didn’t say,” Lauren answered.

“I should stop by his office tomorrow to see if anything is troubling him,” Brandon said.

“It probably wouldn’t hurt to give him a little feedback on occasion, you know,” added Lauren.

“Did I miss something?” Brandon asked.

“Oh, I don’t know. He just didn’t seem to know if he is focusing his efforts where you, Barry and Darren prefer,” Lauren said.

“Okay, I’ll talk to him.” Brandon said. “I have been a little preoccupied, between work and working on my passion.”

“Passion?” Lauren asked, surprised to hear Brandon refer to his studies in such a manner.

“I don’t know what to call it; my ‘calling,’ perhaps?” Brandon asked, bearing a slightly self-conscious smile.

“I just wanted to make sure I knew what you were talking about,” Lauren said, laughing. “I didn’t think I had witnessed any new passion lately; and if I haven’t, no one better had.”

“Understood, loud and clear,” Brandon said with a chuckle. He knew his wife wasn’t questioning his fidelity; just commenting on the subject since it came up—as a gentle reminder of the trouble he would find himself in if he strayed.

After dinner, Brandon went to his study. Without surprise, he almost immediately became lost in thought.

He pondered the changes that happened during the 227 years since the United Franchises Compact had been ratified.

In fact, so much had changed that if any of the Framers could see American sports now, they would be horrified.

The biggest change began in the early 1860’s, after war broke out between the franchises.

While the Uncivil War did not actually change the United Franchises Compact, several post-war addenda modified it slightly.

Even though the constitutional changes to the rules of the game were minor, the differences in the game played before and after the war were profound.

The fact that profound changes to the game occurred despite minor changes to the Compact pointed to unknown factors leading the charge.

The post-war changes stemmed from the rise of newfound authority never before witnessed under the United Franchises Compact.

During the war, Management enacted a number of highly-questionable rules. But, in the midst of the war's fury, no one really had time to ask questions.

After the smoke cleared, traditional soccer players tried to make sense out of the nonsense they faced. Things never before allowed were permitted to remain; reasonable protests, wholly ignored.

Over time, later generations came to realize they had little choice but to accept some things as beyond their power to alter. One of those things were the history-changing Referee calls that became increasingly common in the decades following the war.

Constant change became the norm. Nothing was held sacred and nothing was seen as outside of the power of the United Franchises to transform.

The first of the despised Referee calls dealt with the game's name. Proponents for change argued since soccer was played with the "foot," the game should be called "football" instead of soccer.

Referees deemed the proposal too rational to ignore. And so, "Soccer" and "Football" were deemed legally equivalent terms under the United Franchises Compact.

After the ruling, the game played as before; the changes would come later.

Once enough people started calling soccer “football,” agitators argued that the game played should be the one historically called “football.”

Soccer soon began a subtle transition into the sport that was played with an oval ball advanced with the players’ hands. Soccer traditionalists became infuriated with the intentional twisting of rules into definitions wholly opposite their original meanings.

Traditionalists grew increasingly alarmed. After all, the United Franchises Compact laid out soccer not only in name, but also in detail.

But, details—individual rules of the game—did not stop precedent-setting Referees with an agenda.

Boundaries became blurred with each new Referee call, as the game shifted ever more toward the game always known by the name, “football.”

But, throughout it all, The Soccer Rulebook stood essentially unchanged. Radical football promoters didn’t try to change the Rulebook—only the way people saw it.

None of the formal rules changed, including the rule specifying that no player other than the Goalie could touch the ball with his hands once the ball was in play. Nevertheless, even this important rule suffered radical change through “reinterpretation.”

The controversial ruling first pointed out “hands” referred to anatomically-unique parts of the body than “fingers” and “thumbs.”

Then, the ruling held that players could touch the ball with their “fingers” and “thumbs” without offense, as long as the ball didn’t touch the palm of the “hand.”

Although the original definition of “hands” for the game included the whole extremity below the armpit, it now swung to the opposite extreme.

Using a modified hand grip, keeping their thumb and fingers flexed, players could throw, catch and run with the ball during the game.

At first, players used all ten digits for the catching and running.

Later, Referees ruled running with the ball tucked against one’s chest with five digits was also allowed. After all, the original rules allowed players to trap the ball with their chests. If the ball could touch the chest and the fingers separately at separate times without foul, the ruling reasoned a ball could touch both the chest and fingers at the same time without foul.

The ball morphed from round to oval soon after the beginning of the 20th Century. The call was made by a Referee who noted no man-made ball filled with air was ever truly round.

Upon the closest of examinations, he argued, every inflated soccer ball would be narrower in circumference than at an opposing point of reference.

Since no ball was perfectly round, balls of greater “oval-ness” had to be allowed, he asserted, because any difference between a “round” and an “oval-shaped” ball lay only in degree and not in principle.

United Franchises game officials became so powerful that they seemed to be able to change the meanings of written words.

The Compact originally unchangeable except by formal addenda ratified by three-fourths of the separate franchises began a slow change at the hands of game officials who were not delegated any power to make even the smallest of formal changes.

Magically, these changes materialized through “reinterpretation” of ordinary words into meanings that were diametrically opposed to their original.

Intellect devolved into a morass of nonsense. Two plus two no longer amounted to four in the Lost Land of Aminica.

Football proponents redefined words until the transition of soccer to Old World football was complete.

In 1917, the other shoe dropped. Aminica began sending a premier football team to the Old World Football Championships.

Open betting on American football played with the hands followed suit. Soon, gambling on sports became every bit as prevalent in America as it was in the Old World. Without surprise, bet-taking encouraged special favors and corruption.

For instance, a gambler with high stakes might succeed in bribing a Referee to turn a blind eye to a player's indiscretion, or to unfairly target a player on the opposing team.

Payoffs and back-room deals were cut at every opportunity. Soon, the New World did not seem at that different from the Old.

In the 1930's, other sports underwent radical transformation as well.

All sports but soccer were supposed to be reserved to the individual franchises under the 10th Addendum, but now, nothing could stop the United Franchises from encroaching into the realm of the local franchises.

Soon, baseball and basketball had national leagues of their own—leagues that played against other franchise teams throughout the Union.

Ironically, the game held sacrosanct in the Compact as the Supreme Sport of the Land no longer saw formal play at the United Franchises level.

By 2016, the 10th Addendum appeared to be a dead letter and by most measures, the remainder of the United Franchise Compact of 1789 seemed meaningless, if not null and void.

While the “changes” were opposed by many, others who profited from the new interpretations were thrilled.

Soccer purists, longing for the traditional game, realized their only remaining opportunity to regain lost ground lay with elections. They aimed to elect the most conservative members of Management and Sports Commissioners.

Since the Sports Commissioner nominated Referees, electing conservative candidates for the highest office was deemed most crucial.

The race to elect Sports Commissioners became the overriding concern of sportsmen everywhere.

In time, millions (and then billions) of dollars were spent to elect a sympathetic person to a post paying only a few hundred thousand dollars a year.

Tragically, the country founded as a Constitutional Republic with limited powers began to increasingly operate as a mob-rule democracy of unlimited powers.

Everything was thrown up for grabs to the Rule of the Majority controlled by those with the deepest pockets, with precious little ever kept out of the grubby, meddling hands of petty bureaucrats and slimy sports politicians who rose like scum to the top of the politically-infested pond.

The war against oppression had been won 234 years before, but the Aminican people watched helplessly as corruption gained ground nearly every election season, legislative session, and Referee ruling.

Chapter 5

“Good evening,” Brandon said, rising to his feet, as Conner, Shelly, Zane and young Abigail sat down at the restaurant table.

“Hi, Dad, Mom,” Conner answered, as the others extended greetings to one another.

The talk remained light and casual until the waitress finished taking their orders.

“So, Conner, to what do owe this pleasure?” Brandon asked, as Lauren shot him a reproving look with a hint of equal curiosity.

“Can’t we meet for dinner, without there being an objective?” Conner asked, trying to keep a straight face.

“Yes, it is possible,” Brandon said. “But, it’s probably not true, judging by the redness of your face.”

“Okay,” Conner admitted, laughing, knowing he could never bluff his way at cards. “I guess now is as good of a time as any to tell you—Shelly is four months pregnant.

“Surprise! We are having another baby even when we thought we were done.”

“I knew it,” Lauren burst out, smiling as she got up to hug her son and daughter-in-law.

“Well, Zane,” Brandon said, resting his hand firmly on his grandson’s shoulder. “It looks like you are going to be a big brother, again.”

Turning to Conner and Shelly, Brandon heartily congratulated the two of them. He was thrilled the extended family was growing again after too many years without celebrations.

Dinner went well, but the grandparents’ excitement turned into a restless night of sleep.

Barry, Brandon and Darren met in the coming weeks as often as they could. They used each other as sounding boards, testing theories and following plausible leads, only to face again an impenetrable block wall.

If they could only discover why soccer wasn’t the major sport in Aminica anymore, maybe they could find some way to rejuvenate it.

Once soccer was again played back where and how the Framers intended it, the Crawford family business could thrive and their family honor would be restored. But, despite their late nights and long weekends, no real progress was yet ever made.

“We have spent a great deal of time studying history, with precious little to show for it,” Darren announced during one of their conversations. “It’s high time we figure out what on earth we are doing wrong.”

“Perhaps, we have been concentrating too much on symptoms that are mostly irrelevant instead of a deeper underlying cause. Maybe, we need to pay less attention to the obvious and start looking for something more obscure—a common thread running deep through the causes of corruption.”

“You may be on to something there,” Brandon said anxiously.

“We’ve been chasing our tail, trying to make sense of all these troubling issues.

“For instance, we know The Soccer Rulebook only authorizes the game of soccer to be played throughout the Union. But, ironically, soccer is now the only major sport no longer competitively played throughout the Union.

“Baseball, basketball, and football were supposed to be played only within the separate franchises. But, without even adding any new addenda, football is now played nationally using manipulated rules originally meant for soccer.

“And, baseball and basketball are also played now throughout the Union, established as public corporations, independent of the United Franchises Compact.

“Imagine the nerve of calling these leagues ‘Independent Establishments.’ As if any sports program established independently of our Compact could have validity throughout the country. Yet, the programs are treated as if they’re fully valid—as if they were specifically listed within our Compact.

“Everywhere one looks, actions once prohibited are now allowed and actions once allowed are now forbidden.

“‘Up’ is down and ‘down’ is up. ‘Out’ is in and ‘in’ is out. It all just seems to be such nonsense.”

“You know,” Darren said, carrying his thought farther, “Maybe, it would be helpful to name this contradictory issue we face—the odd phenomenon where the federal sports authority acts contrary to its delegated powers.

“Any suggestions?”

“How about ‘The Contrary Contradiction?’”
Brandon asked after thinking for a few moments.

“How about ‘The Illogical Inconsistency?’”
Barry asked.

“Not bad,” Darren said. “Those alliterations are fine, but don’t quite hit the spot for me.”

“How about ‘The Peculiar Conundrum?’” Barry said as he bolted upright, the name suddenly coming to him.

“The Peculiar Conundrum!” Brandon said. “I love it. A conundrum so different it is also ‘peculiar.’ Yes, The Peculiar Conundrum has my vote.”

“Mine, too,” Darren said. “Perhaps, naming the situation we face will bring us that much closer to understanding it.”

“I hope so,” Barry said. “We need to find at least some small measure of success to keep us going. We need to step back, slow down, *and think*.”

“We need to concentrate on what my chiropractor calls ‘The Big Idea,’” Darren said, “so all else can ‘follow.’”

“In our case, our Big Idea is to understand how members of Management, Referees, and Sports Commissioners could ever get away with ignoring their strict constitutional limitations.

“We are confused, I think, because we are too-easily distracted by our opponents who seem to hold all the cards. They lead us astray, and we too-willingly follow their lead, because nothing else seems to make sense to us.”

“When you say that,” Barry said, “All I can think of is a Killdeer bird. You know, a plover.

Seeing his brother's questioning facial expression, Barry hurried to explain. "When a roving predator comes too close to the Killdeer's nest, which lays on the open ground, the parents feign broken wings and shrilly give out their familiar 'killdeer' call. Stumbling away from the nest, the birds invite the predator to chase them. Meanwhile, they succeed in moving the danger away from the nest, where the real prey lies helplessly.

"I think we are being suckered in the same way, focusing on matters to which our opponents want us to pay attention. They distract us from things that matter and divert our attention to things that don't.

"We need to start looking for the nest. We need to start looking *where they don't want us to look.*"

"We know our opponents are not magical, after all," Barry continued. "They must have some clever method for their success. We need to find it and expose it to the world.

"Since deceptive people are the last ones who would ever reveal the remarkable method behind their spectacular success, we shouldn't waste any more time *listening to them.*

"We just waste our time on things that cannot matter, in the grand scheme of things.

“Effects cannot defy a cause. Just because something appears to exist doesn’t mean it actually does. Our mistake has been thinking the mirage we think we see is real. It’s not—it’s an illusion.” Barry said, the confidence growing in his voice.

“We need to discover the fount of their power, the secret of their success. We need to dig deep, not where they intend, *but where the evidence directs us.*”

The Crawford brothers began to ignore the everyday political circus that sapped the lifeblood of anyone who spent time within those three rings.

They kept their pocket Compacts handy and referenced them often—confident the small booklet would help them find their answer.

But, to succeed, they would have to think differently than all the traditional soccer supporters who had failed for the 100 years before them.

With Conner’s presence easing the workload, Brandon and Lauren were able to plan a quiet week’s vacation, after one of Lauren’s old college roommates invited them to visit her.

Lauren felt obligated. Her friend’s husband had passed away two years earlier and the two gals hadn’t seen one another since the funeral.

Without the pressure of work bearing down on his shoulders, Brandon spent a great deal of the vacation thinking about The Peculiar Conundrum while Lauren and her friend visited local sites.

Time and again, Brandon could be found lounging on Lauren's friend's couch, reading the United Franchises Compact cover to cover. It became an obsession—his conviction that there must be something in the Compact that would clarify things, if only he could find it *and understand*.

Flipping through the pages for what seemed to be the thousandth time, a small cluster of words on the worn paper suddenly stood out to Brandon's tired eyes. Peering closely, he recognized a slightly-familiar four-word phrase, "in all cases whatsoever."

He knew he had seen this odd phrase before—somewhere else—but could not recall where.

The phrase stood out, along with an equally-odd word placed earlier in the clause, the word "exclusive."

The clause discussed the power of Management to exercise "exclusive" legislation "in all cases whatsoever" in an area of land set aside for the District Seat.

These words made him freeze. Like a stroke of lightning, he realized the words were completely unlike any and every other group of words found anywhere else in the Compact.

In every other instance, the power given was restricted in its form, to be used only for its designated purposes and no more.

But, the words “exclusive” and especially “in all cases whatsoever” were words of almost unlimited connotation—they were a conundrum so peculiar to the Compact that they stood out in vivid contrast to the remainder of the document. It was as if these words suddenly shouted to him, “LOOK HERE!”

Alarm bells were ringing in his ears while lights flashed in his mind’s eye.

Was this “conundrum so peculiar” the root source of “The Peculiar Conundrum?” Could this simple phrase be the inevitable cause of the latter?

He immediately saw a strong correlation between the two, but was one the actual effect of the other? Could it be so darned simple?

Brandon’s mind raced through the endless maze of implications, trying to unravel their meanings and endless repercussions.

Decades of study had filled his brain with thousands of separate bits of information, but until now he had never found a way to link all that information into an understandable and coherent structure that adequately explained the current day.

Those thousands of fragments of information were now coalescing in his mind, forming a recognizable picture *that finally made sense*.

His Big Idea regarding The Peculiar Conundrum was coming together, almost by itself, almost by magic.

He had long understood founding principles as well as any lay person—but never before had the contradictions practiced within Aminica made sense. After all, current practices seemed to contradict the mandated Rulebook, but yet remained in use.

For generations, people in charge had been doing things that were contrary to founding principles with impunity. Instead of being properly circumscribed, they curiously remained in power and their actions remained in force.

Brandon could not wait to get back to work. He needed to talk with his brothers. He wanted their help deciphering all the information now coming at him at light speed, to help test his latest hypothesis.

His first day back, Brandon exploded into the office in excitement, crying out, “I have found it!”

Seeing their brother's radiant glow, Barry and Darren immediately stopped what they were doing and made their way to the conference room.

Brandon closed the door and began telling his brothers of his findings. "In my gut," Brandon began, "I know I have just found the root source of The Peculiar Conundrum."

"There you go with your gut, again," Barry laughed, even as he leaned forward in eager anticipation.

"Everything seems to hinge on an all-inclusive phrase I found in our Great Compact," Brandon said, ignoring Barry's playful remark. "It's small—four words long—'in all cases whatsoever.' I am sure I have heard the phrase before, but I can't remember where."

Over the next year of intense study, the Crawfords considered the phrase from every angle.

Tracing it back to its origin in 1766, Darren found the phrase's most prominent mention a decade later, on July 4, 1776. On that day, the phrase appeared in The Freedom Proclamation.

That was where Brandon had first noticed it, without realizing its significance.

The phrase in the Proclamation was part of the sentence, “For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us ‘in all cases whatsoever.’”

This sentence was the last of nine examples all pointing back to Beaumont’s oppressive rule, here specifically referring to “Acts of pretended Legislation” that were “foreign to our Compact.”

In the Freedom Proclamation, the Founders used this phrase to signify the ultimate root cause of all the different things Beaumont had unfairly done to *restrict* American’s freedom. But, then, oddly enough, 11 years later the Framers used that *same* phrase in their *very own Compact*, the one that in all other ways helped *secure* their freedom.

With the phrase’s disturbing history in colonial times, it should not necessarily surprise anyone that use of it later could become a real problem.

The other historical references the brothers found likewise referred back to Beaumont’s harsh claim—South Coronado mentioned the phrase most heatedly, in the opening sentence of its 1776 Compact.

The brothers researched the period of time they began referring as “The Turning Point” in Colonial America.

1765 was the fateful year when Beaumont renounced her former “hands-off” colonial policy. Although the Aminican colonies were initially allowed to function domestically with little outside intervention, that all changed in 1765.

The problem was Beaumont’s growing domestic corruption. The perceived solution was taxing the overseas Aminicans to fatten Beaumont’s coffers, even though Aminicans had no vote beyond the seas, they had no say on elected “Representatives.”

To fill her empty pockets, Beaumont imposed duties on all sporting goods and stadium entry tickets sold in Aminica.

The Ticket Tax enraged the Aminicans. It was forced on them by a foreign power, against their will and without their consent.

The young colonies were full of robust Aminican blood; the stirred-up patriots refused to support an adversary who sought to conquer their bodies and quash their spirits.

Aminicans far and wide refused to purchase any sporting good carrying the tax. They learned to do without or with what they had.

Colonial soccer games—played under rules that the colonists enacted themselves—went underground. Games were played on impromptu fields and in empty warehouses to avoid the Ticket Tax.

Since ticket sales were non-existent, Beaumont took the opportunity to transform the sanctioned game (soccer) to Old World football. Teams were mustered to play using foreign rules from the Old World.

Although the stands were almost bare of spectators, gambling thrived.

Aminicans viewed the tax as tribute paid to a foreign bully who had no power over them beyond a direct threat of force.

They saw Beaumont as a colossal threat 'cross the ocean, making unreasonable demands and expecting the Aminicans to meekly abide by them without say.

But, the Aminicans would not remain silent.

The colonists issued written protests explaining their refusals to purchase, but their remonstrances fell on closed ears. After all, Aminicans were not represented in the Beaumont League Club, the team owners overseeing Beaumont sports.

As The Boycott of Beaumont became embarrassingly successful, Beaumont sporting goods began piling up unsold on the sea-stung boards of the Aminican docks.

Beaumont sought to save face by subsidizing her sports manufacturers, so they could afford to mark down their price tags to begin moving stagnated inventory.

With subsidies, Beaumont's sporting goods were suddenly priced cheaper than ever before, even with the added sports tax.

Out of principle, however, Aminicans still refused to buy the taxed sporting goods, no matter the price. Instead, they chanted "Sports Freedom or Bust" and "Live Free or Die Trying."

The financial losses of the Beaumont sports companies proved unsustainable. There was nothing Beaumont could do—the Aminicans refused to buy the goods even at rock-bottom prices. Beaumont had little choice other than to fold on the Ticket Tax, but not before she sought to assert her power in one final, grand gesture.

On the same day the Beaumont League Club rescinded its Ticket Tax in 1766, it issued its infamous Declaratory Act.

In homes all across Aminica, young and old quietly read the Declaratory Act, amazed at its bold claim of absolute power.

In taverns across the land, the hushed, fearful tones spoken in private gave way in public to contemptuous shouts of rebellious anger.

After all, Beaumont was asserting an absolute power and divine right to bind the Aminicans without their consent and against their will “in all cases whatsoever.”

The implications of the power Beaumont claimed to hold by divine right can be found within the words, “in all cases whatsoever.” The extent of political power these words entailed cannot be overstated, so extensive was it.

The phrase signified complete power exercised over a conquered people in all possible cases, without limitation. Heads would be bowed with no hope of ever again being raised skyward. It signified total oppression where the oppressed held no say whatsoever.

Beaumont’s 1766 Declaratory Act was the fateful origin of the phrase, “in all cases whatsoever.”

The vast implications of this phrase played out in a multitude of domineering ways during the troubled decade leading up to the colonists’ 1776 Freedom Proclamation.

Once the Ticket Tax was repealed in 1766, Beaumont's sports products began selling again. However, Beaumont stubbornly refused to back down from her bold assertion that she had the absolute power to impose her will on the Aminicans, including the continued imposition of football.

Over the next difficult decade, the patient Aminican people desperately sought to entice Beaumont to withdraw her dreadful claim of complete dominion.

But, the Beaumont Commissioner refused to stand idly by as others dared to challenge his absolute rule. His crusade of oppression would not stop until the Aminican people were pummeled into utter submission as a conquered populace.

The first battle skirmish broke out on April 19, 1775, as Beaumont security guards raided the storage lockers containing community soccer gear of two neighboring towns of one of the overly-rebellious northern franchises.

For another tiresome year, the Aminicans tried to negotiate with Beaumont, but her Sports Commissioner showed no inclination to reciprocate.

The principled Aminican people, desiring freedom over peace and soccer over football, issued their formal Freedom Proclamation a year later.

The Freedom Proclamation was Aminica's statement to counter Beaumont's 1766 Declaratory Act.

In resolute firmness, the Aminican people boldly declared their independence from Beaumont's arbitrary and capricious rule.

And Beaumont? Beaumont waged war.

The resulting carnage stemming from Aminica's brave Proclamation was the only way to wrench themselves free from Beaumont's firm grasp. The Proclamation foreshadowed Aminican resolve and helped forged a nation of principled patriots willing to back in deed what they proclaimed in voice.

In their Proclamation, the Aminican people boldly asserted their unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the free pursuit of sports.

In their Freedom Proclamation, Aminicans denounced the single problem facing them—the assertion of an absolute power over them without their consent and against their will “in all cases whatsoever.”

Of course, the single problem facing Aminica manifested itself in a multitude of differing pains.

Therefore, the July 4, 1776 document listed a great number of real-life examples showing how Beaumont's unjust rule had wormed its way into Aminican life.

Full-scale war raged between Aminica and Beaumont for seven long years before the battle for independence was won and formal peace returned to the land.

Highest on the list of freedoms of the Aminican people was the right to assemble into sports franchises of their own choosing.

They asserted their unfettered right to make their own rules and regulations for sporting events of their choice. The Aminican people proclaimed the right to profit from those games or to play for fun, as they saw fit, without having to pay tribute to any other country.

And, in Aminica, the people overwhelmingly chose soccer as their sport of choice.

The Free Sports movement thrived while Aminica prospered. This movement was a decided break from the Old World games, where the corrupt rulers supporting the games also made up the rules.

No one had ever been surprised when the rules enacted by corrupt rulers cast favor on the rule-makers, rather than on the game itself.

The brothers talked most of the morning before work obligations interfered with their newfound zeal.

Later, when Brandon and Darren crossed paths in the hall, Darren asked, “Do have the first quarter’s sales figures for our Roo Shoe yet?”

“I was interested to see how accurate our sales projections were.”

“I don’t have the final numbers yet,” Brandon said. “But, I think we are in the neighborhood of 120% of estimates.”

“Fantastic,” Darren said.

“Yes,” Brandon said. “Especially considering that I had inflated those early estimates over the hard data, just because I figured we could do better.”

“You know, Brandon,” Darren began, “Billy graduates in a few months. I wanted to talk with you, before another company snatches him up. Seeing how much Conner has helped us this past year, I’m not so sure I want to wait a few years before hiring Billy.

“I really like the idea of having Billy work here. I could see him doing well in any number of different departments.

“I understand the benefits of getting outside experience, but I’m not so sure it outweighs the opportunity cost involved with waiting.

“But, since you patiently waited for Conner to gain outside experience, I didn’t want to make any moves without asking for your opinion. Any thoughts?”

“I really enjoy working with Conner,” Brandon answered. “There’s no doubt that hiring him removed some of our roadblocks standing in the way of our sales growth.

“Fresh ideas and youthful energy, especially in established companies like ours that target younger customers, can make a huge difference.

“Perhaps, the best role for us old fuddy-duddies is mentoring young minds. The wisdom we’ve gained from experience can help them channel their enthusiasm and boundless energy,” Brandon continued, cracking a rueful smile.

“Of course, we want to remain relevant and purposeful. It is perhaps a fine tightrope to tread.

“I am all for bringing Billy on board, if you two prefer it. I know Barry has always liked Billy, so he won’t have any objections, either.

“Sales figures warrant hiring additional people even where the figures stand now, let alone with increasing sales. We want to hire the best people we can afford who will stay with us long-term.”

“Great,” Darren said. “I’ll talk with Barry to confirm with him and then work on Billy. Who knows, maybe we will see more fresh blood around here soon.”

Although the Crawford brothers concentrated on their work, they made time for investigating The Peculiar Conundrum whenever they could.

The contrast between the United Franchises Compact’s requirements and how people in power ignored them was just too blatant to dismiss.

Throughout its many clauses, the Compact listed enumerated powers for the support of soccer. Corruption was minimized because Management and sports officials held no power to make changes to the game.

While members of Management could *propose* addenda to change the rules of the game, only the franchises could ratify them. This meant that Management could *never* cast a vote on addenda even though they may have first proposed them. Members and officials were given as little power as possible, enough to do their jobs.

But, this single provision “in all cases whatsoever” directly authorized members of Management to exercise virtually unlimited power over all other sports within the area of land the members occupied exclusively.

It was just too fantastic to believe that this anomaly didn't clarify at least some of The Peculiar Conundrum.

The Aminican colonists sent their Freedom Proclamation to Beaumont, declaring their freedom and criticizing Beaumont's claimed ability to bind the Aminican colonists "in all cases whatsoever."

With the Founders' Freedom Proclamation, they threw off Beaumont's shackles, declaring that thereafter they had every right to govern themselves.

But, curiously, the Framers of the 1789 Compact included this same phrase—"in all cases whatsoever"—the same one the Founders had rightfully denounced and threw off 13 years earlier.

However, the more the brothers studied this ominous four-word phrase, the less shocked they became knowing it found a home also in the Compact for the United Franchises of Aminica.

After all, it would make little sense for the United Franchises Compact to list *every* rule for all the *local* sports that could be played only within exclusive legislative lands such as the District Seat.

It took some eighty-four clauses in The Soccer Rulebook for the Framers to structure the United Franchises soccer authority and then to provide the rules for Union-wide soccer games.

Since the District Seat was not part of any franchise, it would need its own rules for local sports. But, adding hundreds of more clauses into the Compact just to list the rules for local baseball, basketball and football games that could be played only in the District Seat would be ridiculous.

The District Seat, after all, was an infinitesimal portion of the United Franchises of Aminica, holding only a negligible percentage of Aminica's population.

The Compact was meant as the guide for the whole Union and all of the Aminican people—it would make little sense to multiply its length three or four-fold just to provide information relevant only for a few people in one very small and wholly unique part the Union.

Neither would it be right to deny the right to play local sports to people living in the District Seat.

While a third option existed—playing all sports in standardized leagues throughout all the Union—this option lay counter to the prudent intentions of the nation's Framers.

No, the Framers wisely determined corruption was far too powerful and destabilizing of a force to play *every* sport Union-wide under a nationalized power.

To have a Union-wide sports authority for more than one sport would destroy each franchise's ability to maintain local control over their own unique circumstances.

The plan set forth allowed the franchises to remain distinct from one another, protecting elements of their culture and preferences that did not need to be stamped and pressed into absolute uniformity.

The Framers' answer to corruption was to *divide and separate* power, not accumulate it into one giant cesspool where an infection endangered the whole.

Keeping the franchises separate, unique and important was not seen as a weakness of the Union, but its strength.

The key to understanding two centuries of growing indifference to the United Franchises Compact was to realize that while it listed many inviolate rules, *it also created a single exception to all of them.*

This wholly-unique exception allowed members of Management the express power to enact needed rules to play local sports in the District of Colivera.

Nowhere else in the whole United Franchises of Aminica were the people charged to oversee the games also given the express power to make up the rules.

Only on the exclusive legislative grounds (for the District Seat and for the stadiums, lockers, toolsheds, ware-houses, and other needful buildings located throughout the country that supported the national play of the Supreme Sport of the Land) was there a complete lack of inviolate rules by which supporting members and officials were to abide.

To discover how The Peculiar Conundrum came into existence—how an unknown loophole was exploited beyond all measure—it was finally time to stop looking so closely at all those normal rules and take a magnifying glass to the exception.

Chapter 6

The more the brothers read and understood the Compact, the more they came to appreciate how absurd it would have been to add explicit rules for every sport just for a handful of people in the District Seat.

No, the approach taken by the Framers was not out of line, given the exclusive legislative lands.

The problem arose only after power-thirsty scoundrels figured out how they could bypass the original containment system without letting anyone else realize what they were doing.

Darren researched the historical events that helped create the need for an area of land controlled exclusively by Management in the first place.

The War for Freedom drained gold out of the franchise treasuries as fast as the blood of their soldiers flowed into the cold, hard earth. The franchises ultimately won the war, but their taste of victory was tempered by the emptiness of their coffers.

Originally a disorganized collection of franchises, the franchises had little or no money to pay their soldiers during much of the war. In 1783, after the war's end, a few hundred soldiers marched on a meeting of Management being held in Prescott, demanding their past-due wages.

Management called for protection from Prescott, but none proved forthcoming.

Perhaps, Prescott's Executive reasoned any guards he might call out would just side with the ill-behaved insurgents. After all, the guards had been part of the same garrisons, and most of them were owed wages from the war, too.

The standoff ended when intimidated members of Management fled the city a few days later, vowing that they would never again rely on the mercy of any one franchise to protect them.

Tragically, this single instance of non-violent rebellion against civil authority was all tyranny would need to gain traction in the land of sports freedom.

The Crawfords' made their second breakthrough while discussing the 10th Addendum.

Brandon realized the 10th Addendum—which explicitly reserved the competitive play of local sports to the separate franchises—could not apply in the District of Colivera. Why? Simply because no franchise any long had *any* power over the land ceded for the District of Colivera.

In 1791, the franchise of Maringo gave a tract of land not over three-miles-square to Management and the United Franchises, for the purpose of establishing the District Seat.

Members of Management received *local* powers over the new District lands from Maringo *when Maringo transferred them the land*.

Upon transfer, the powers originally reserved to Maringo following ratification of the United Franchises Compact were thereby transferred to members of Management and United Franchises sports officials.

In other words, members of Management now had the power to exercise *local* powers *just like a franchise*, for the District Seat.

This power was explicitly allowed by the United Franchises Compact, but the local power actually came from the franchise of Maringo, when it transferred the area of land.

Since Maringo specifically ceded *all of its local powers* over this specific tract of land to Management, the 10th Addendum *could no longer apply* in the surrendered area.

After all, the 10th Addendum reserved local powers to the franchises *that they did not cede to the United Franchises with ratification of the Compact*. But, in its cession of land for the District Seat, Maringo literally reserved no local or franchise powers over its ceded property. Thus, there weren't any residual powers for the 10th Addendum to here reserve to Maringo!

That is why, after all, members of Management could thereafter exercise “exclusive” powers “in all cases whatsoever,” as explicitly required by the United Franchises Compact.

It was critical to realize this unique situation stood completely *apart* from the normal powers meant to be exercised by Management throughout the Union, powers which *every* franchise delegated to members the Compact.

When members of Management acted under this special authority where powers had been delegated *by just one franchise*, members could enact legislation *without ties to normal constitutional constraints*. They could make laws elsewhere enacted by franchises—on topics without any tie to the United Franchises Compact.

The franchises agreed on which powers they wanted Management to have *for operating throughout the Union*. These powers were enumerated within the United Franchises Compact.

But, the powers ceded by Maringo had nothing to do with those powers that all the franchises gave over to the United Franchises.

The Framers later added the 10th Addendum to better ensure that Management couldn’t encroach into areas they were not supposed to—but only for the whole Union.

10th Addendum issues dealt only with the powers sourced from all the franchises; it does not deal with the powers sourced from only one franchise!

When operating throughout the Union, members of Management find themselves hemmed into the arena of powers delegated to them. They cannot interfere with any of the powers the franchises had kept for themselves.

But, in the District of Colivera, this special exception was wholly distinct and completely different. This special area allowed them to do most anything without violating that important principle.

The powers delegated to Management by the franchises were never meant to limit Management's ability to make all needful rules in the District Seat.

And, "needful" was left to the determination of Management, by its members' discretion.

Because Maringo ceded its local powers to the District Seat, *someone* had to make the laws; it wasn't like murder or robbery could go unpunished, after all.

And, the "someone" who was given explicit authority over the transferred area was *Management*. But, even if Management's members delegated some of their authority over to a local authority they later created—a town council, for instance—the Compact itself vested *Management* with the permanent and final say over the area.

This exercise of what might be called “extraordinary powers” by members of Management did not infringe upon any constitutional principle, including the 10th Addendum.

In other words, the assertion that Management could *never* exercise powers that were reserved to the franchises was patently *false*, for it wholly ignored a special exception.

Members could in the District Seat exercise powers that were otherwise reserved to the franchises elsewhere. This was the glaring hole, the blatant flaw, that fully explained two centuries of continuing failure to take this exception into account.

The implications were profound, stretching to every possible matter of apparent abuse.

Members of Management *did have* the ability to ignore the 10th Addendum, *in a special circumstance*.

Several franchise Compacts counseled wayward sojourners, saying, “A frequent recurrence to fundamental principles is essential to the security of individual right and the perpetuity of free government.”

In other words, frequently going back to basic principles can help a lost people find their way back home to sports liberty.

Fundamental principles begin with soccer, played throughout the Union, under rules detailed in the United Franchises Compact.

Baseball, basketball and football are rightfully played in each franchise under rules detailed in each franchise's Compact.

But, baseball, basketball and football—even though they are otherwise sports reserved to the several franchises—can also be played under United Franchise authority *within the District Seat*, without violating the 10th Addendum.

Keeping this simple principle in mind would help patriots understand how they ended up wandering in a desolate forest for centuries even after their feet touched ground in The Promised Land.

Again, however, the most important principle to explain two hundred years of growing sports oppression was to realize that while baseball, basketball and football could be played in the District of Colivera, *no fixed rules for this area* could be found anywhere delineated in *any* Compact.

Traditional soccer was played under rules established in the United Franchises Compact. Baseball, basketball, and football were played under rules delineated in each franchise Compact.

But, sports jurisdiction in the District of Colivera was different.

Local sports are always different in the District Seat because nowhere in the District are there found any fixed and inviolate sports rules that relate to the playing of baseball, basketball or football.

This difference is profound, because this meant that in the District Seat those persons empowered to oversee the games *also had the direct responsibility to make up the rules!*

Everywhere else, persons empowered to oversee the games had no ability and no power whatsoever to change the rules—the rules would always be decided upon by someone else.

For soccer, neither members of Management nor sports officials could change the rules—only the franchises acting together could make the changes through a ratified addendum.

For baseball, basketball and football played in the franchises, neither could local franchise officials change the rules—they had to submit an addendum to the people of that franchise for the people therein to ratify the proposed changes through an addendum to their franchise Compact.

The bottom line of this new understanding showed that although soccer traditionalists throughout history routinely labeled activities contrary to the spirit of the whole Compact “unconstitutional,” *they were wrong.*

If Management acted under the single exception to all the normal rules—where they were specifically empowered to act “in all cases whatsoever”—did they actually violate *every* clause in the Constitution?

No, not if they were careful. And, boy were they ever careful—careful in their actions and even more careful in their explanations, primarily so they would not give away their powerful secret.

Suddenly, given the brothers’ newfound understanding, their questioning of sports authority changed. The questions became:

1. Are members of Management acting under the authority that all the franchises delegated to them for the whole country; or,
2. Are members of Management acting under the authority that all the franchises allowed, but only one franchise actually ceded them (for the District Seat)?

The District Seat was not a “franchise.” Thus, when dealing with District Seat issues, members of Management were NOT bound to follow the constitutional restrictions The Soccer Rulebook imposed upon “franchises.”

Even though the District was not a franchise, it could nevertheless act much like one—yet without the enumerated limitations or prohibitions actually placed upon “franchises.”

For example, The Soccer Rulebook forbade “franchises” from making rules for soccer. But, this prohibition did NOT include the *local* play of soccer *in the District Seat* because the District was not a “franchise.”

None of the clauses in the Compact kept the District Seat from playing *local* soccer *differently* than the rest of the Union, if members so chose. That meant that none of the Union-wide soccer rules necessarily *had to apply* to the District Seat, so long as it was a *local* soccer game and not a United Franchises soccer game.

In other words, members of Management could start up a B-grade or junior league playing under different rules.

It is important to note that Maringo’s Compact didn’t apply to sports in the District Seat either. Those rules had applied to that plot of land only while it was yet part of Maringo, but its legal status changed with its cession.

Thereafter, members of Management made all the rules.

Since the United Franchises Compact listed no rules for any sport beyond United Franchises soccer and since no local franchise Compact had any hold over the District of Colivera, this area of land was wholly without any formal Compact, bereft of any fixed rule for local sports.

“In all cases whatsoever” meant that members of Management would necessarily *have* to create the rules for local sports in the District of Colivera.

Only in the District of Colivera were the people watching over the game directly empowered to create the necessary rules (and change them along the way, if they desired).

The only real restrictions imposed on the District Seat were the negative restrictions to sports authority listed in the Bill of Sports Rights. Members couldn’t touch that, even for the District Seat, since the prohibitions weren’t geographically limited.

The implications of The Peculiar Conundrum explained two centuries of deceit and growing corruption.

Only when Management enacted sports rules for United Franchises soccer (which became seldom) did members have to abide by the whole Compact.

Even when members of Management *inferred* they were changing the rules of United Franchises soccer, they were not, of course, *because they could not*. They didn’t *ever* have the actual power to do that.

Only the *franchises* could change the United Franchises Compact—never Management, Referees, or the Sports Commissioner. In the end, there are fewer principles actually more unequivocal than that.

Even then, however, it took three-fourths of all the franchises to change even one word of the Compact. And, that was *after* two-thirds of Management had already agreed to propose a formal addendum.

The contrast between perception and reality was staggering.

No member of Management, Sports Commissioner or Referee was *ever* empowered to change the meaning of the United Franchises Compact *by any means whatsoever*.

“Interpreting” the words of the Compact into some new definition, was *absurd*—the biggest fraud ever perpetrated in Aminica.

Management, Referees, and the Sports Commissioner could only make or change the rules (of local sports) *within the District of Colivera*.

Management, Referees and/or the Sports Commissioner even had to necessarily make up every rule of sports in the District of Colivera (beyond United Franchises soccer).

Without any fixed rule for local sports, Management was even empowered in the District Seat to make up unconventional rules, if its members wanted.

For instance, Management could change the number of bases in baseball from four to eight, since no rule of any Compact specified a baseball game may only have four bases, at least for the District of Colivera.

Referees could hold “bases” in baseball to thereafter mean “paired sets,” seemingly changing a baseball “diamond” to a baseball “octagon.”

It was as if $1 + 1 + 1 + 1$ seemingly equaled 8.

While mathematically-impossible, this answer held legal validity because Referees would retrospectively lay out the necessary math in their ruling: $2(1+1+1+1) = 8$. The only place they could make such a rule was for the District Seat, however.

Managers and Referees could even designate eight bases for *basketball*, a sport without bases—if they wished.

Designating eight bases for a District sport otherwise without bases was every bit as legitimate as any other change ever made there, since Management *never* needed to conform to any rules found in any Compact (for local sports in the District).

But, the very idea that Management or Referees could change the meaning of even one word in the United Franchises Compact was wholly absurd.

The words and phrases of the United Franchises Compact *controlled* members of Management, Referees and Sports Commissioners, not the other way around.

Any justification offered would be only nonsensical babble without legal significance; the real purpose would merely be to confuse the issue. It was the familiar “killdeer” approach; *do whatever it took* to distract one’s enemy from discovering the location of the all-valuable eggs!

The only real question of concern became: How did (local) baseball, basketball, and football games under unified rules (uniform throughout the country) ever end up taking place *outside* of the District of Colivera?

No longer did the Crawford brothers question, “*How* were these strange rules allowed?” Instead they began to question, “*Where* are these strange rules actually allowed?”

And, the answer to that question always rang out, “in the District of Colivera, where members of Management were empowered to act exclusively, ‘in all cases whatsoever.’”

Tragically, this small difference between “How” and “Where” had been enough to stump Aminicans for two hundred years.

But, although the true source of the strange sports rules were located in the District Seat, the games were being played well beyond that limited area.

“We have to figure out how to restrict these darn rascals,” Barry said. “They do whatever they want, all because of one clause of The Soccer Rulebook that inadvertently gives them the authority. But, we need to learn how to enforce the *inherent* geographic restrictions that somehow now appear *irrelevant*.”

“Referees’ double-talk is so difficult to understand. Whenever they can’t legally say something outright, they imply it. That way, they avoid overt fraud. They get the same disastrous result they want, but there is no way for us to prosecute them, because we improperly filled in the gaps due to our ignorance of what was really going on.

Referees say nothing while appearing to say everything. They have mastered these tactics *for a reason*.

“Referees, members of Management and Sports Commissioners cannot *ever* afford to have people truly understand them, for they would end up either powerless or in jail.”

Chapter 7

The Crawford brothers continued to work in their shoe factory by day and study history by night.

Billy was brought on board after spending the summer travelling. He helped take the pressure off Darren, allowing the latter to spend more time studying.

Darren soon became intrigued with the first constitutional controversy, quickly realizing it cast new light on a dark subject.

For all the good she contained, Aminica wasn't immune to the follies and foibles of human nature. Soon after independence, like-minded individuals joined together to advance the New World along their preferences.

The newly-formed Dexterity Party sought to develop the New World along similar lines as the Old, for similar "benefits."

The first Head Cashier for the United Franchises was the party's founder and chief proponent. His party favored large-scale projects for their economic efficiency, and its ability to reward their friends who kept them in power.

Advocates of the Dexterity Party—favorably known as the “Party of Hands” (but unfavorably as the “Sticky-Fingers Party”)—preferred Old World football for its historic profits.

Opposing the Dexterity Party was the Pedestrian Party, founded by the first Secretary of Foreign Affairs.

This Pedestrian Party became known by its enemies as the “Foot Party,” because they wished party members would run away and never come back.

The Pedestrian Party was also called the “Foot Party” by its friends, because they wanted to kick their opponents’ *keisters* for their shameful, self-serving tactics.

The Secretary knew centralized power to be a dangerous thing. A seasoned player in his youth, he enjoyed the game of soccer from the perspective of a player, for the purity of skill needed to play the game well. The financial prospects of the sporting companies were not his first concern.

He purposefully sought to keep stadiums smaller, so families could afford to watch players they knew well.

The Secretary believed that concentrating on the profits of the game instead of the game itself would encourage corruption. The Secretary shunned Old World football for its incestuous affair with corruption.

The showdown between the Cashier and Secretary occurred early on, in 1791.

The epic battle took place over the Cashier's plan to grant an exclusive 20-year marketing agreement to a private vendor. The Cashier proposed to allow this private vendor to sell United Franchises soccer tokens at local franchise stadiums and ballfields.

The Cashier conceded The Soccer Rulebook did not give him that power—at least not directly. But, he argued that he could increase token sales for the big United Franchise games if fans had the option of purchasing tokens locally.

More tokens, of course, meant more profits, ultimately allowing bigger stadiums and greater prestige.

General Managers and Head Coaches were in favor of the Cashier's plan. They were excited about all the money it could bring in, hoping some of it would filter down to their re-election campaigns. They passed the bill with dollar signs floating in front of their eyes.

The first Sports Commissioner, who needed to sign off on the Cashier's plan, was not entirely convinced of its propriety. He required the Cashier and Secretary—and also his Chief Security Officer—to provide written arguments in favor or against.

This issue became the first significant controversy; where the first claims of “unconstitutional” behavior were ever asserted.

The Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Security Chief sided with one another. They denied that the United Franchises had the power to sell soccer tokens in local franchise baseball, basketball and football stadiums.

The Head Cashier strenuously objected to his opponents' claims, which had been first presented to the Commissioner.

The Cashier waxed long and eloquent in his rebuttal. But, the length of his opinion primarily served to hide his true motives from prying eyes.

A careful reading of his opinion reveals both his method and his madness.

Seemingly in passing, the Cashier briefly mentioned the only part of his answer that mattered. Under the “exclusive” legislative authority for the District Seat, he pointed out, members of Management were able to act “in all cases whatsoever.”

Next, he boldly asserted members may there do “all that any government whatsoever may do” because “language does not afford a more complete designation of sovereign power than in those comprehensive terms” (referencing the phrase, “in all cases whatsoever”).

The ramifications of his reluctant confession were far beyond the comprehension of most mortals, even from that learned era.

An indication of its critical importance would be realizing that nearly every transgression over the next 226 years would follow his fateful confession’s lead. The Cashier had found a way to tap into incomprehensible power.

True, The Soccer Rulebook did not expressly prohibit the United Franchises from selling soccer tokens in local stadiums. Therefore, members of Management could follow his plan, the Head Cashier asserted.

To understand this position of unfettered discretion, one had to understand his viewpoint, as well as the history and legal structure of Aminica.

Asserting members of Management suddenly had *inherent discretion* to do anything *except things that were forbidden* was quite the change. The Framers had set up the Compact so that members of Management were only allowed to act in areas that they were specifically *given power*, after all.

Now, however, the Cashier was saying that Management could act in any area *except* where they were *forbidden*.

In reality, the Cashier's proposal was the complete opposite of using only those means both "necessary and proper" in the pursuance of an enumerated end, which was the means specified within the Compact. Now, the Cashier boldly claimed Management had inherent powers, able to act *except* as members were specifically forbidden.

To see through common misconceptions regarding this radical difference, it is imperative to resort back to the fundamental principles of the Compact. Then, one must never forget those principles, even when lesser rules seem to contradict them but nevertheless remain intact.

The most basic of the founding principles of the American Republic was that the separate franchises, together, recorded in a written Compact the rules of soccer played throughout the Union.

All other sports (besides soccer) looked to the individual franchises for authority.

Only the franchises together could change the United Franchise Compact; only the franchises together could change the rules for soccer.

When the thirteen franchises withdrew some of their power and gave it over to Management to oversee the game of soccer, the franchises kept their power over their booths selling local game tokens for baseball, basketball and football. Since they had never given up power over local sports, Management could not force franchise token booths to sell United Franchises soccer tokens.

Given this over-arching, fundamental principle (that all of Management's nationwide power came from what the franchises were willing to give them) and its ramifications in the present case, the Cashier obviously could not rely on the normal set of rules to support his plan.

Thus, he deftly deferred to the lone exception to all the normal rules.

Looking at The Soccer Rulebook, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Security Chief denied Management had the authority to impose the Cashier's plan for tokens.

Perhaps, these otherwise learned men foolishly ignored the important exception to all the rules. Their confusion was certainly understandable, however.

After all, the Cashier proposed national token sales at local franchise baseball, basketball and football token booths. These areas were not located on exclusive legislative grounds like United Franchise soccer stadiums would be.

The Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Security Chief ultimately argued, however, that the Cashier's plan violated *every* clause of the United Franchises Compact. In this argument, however, they were clearly wrong. They missed the single clause providing a special exception for unique circumstances.

By splitting hairs, the Cashier cleverly won the argument he should have lost. The normal rules of the Compact, after all, did not give Management the power to do *what* he wanted, *where* he wanted.

The Cashier's opponents implied members of Management could *never* do what he wanted. To prove them wrong, the Cashier only needed to create an argument that ignored the context. He only needed to show that Management *somewhere* had the enumerated power to do as he proposed.

The Cashier ignored the inconvenient truth that he could only do what he proposed, *somewhere else* other than *where* he actually sought.

By playing his cards carefully, the Cashier was able to succeed with his dastardly plan. He tapped into a fount of power that gave him the authority to do what he wanted, when he wanted, seemingly even where he wanted.

To pull it off, he needed to be rather general and none-too-precise on one hand, and ultra-focused on the other.

The insidious nature of the Cashier's actual agenda went far, far beyond token booths.

The Cashier purposefully intended to propose something far more sinister. His actual goal was to provide explicit means to implement totalitarian control.

The Cashier outlined his diabolical new standard for determining what members of Management, Referees and the Sports Commissioner were allowed to do. He asserted that their actions no longer needed to be both "necessary and proper" while pursuing an enumerated end, which was the allowable means-test specified in the Compact.

Instead, he now asserted that all obvious measures within comprehended ends which were not directly forbidden were allowed.

Never mind that the Cashier had personally defended the “necessary and proper” allowable means-test before the Compact was ratified. After all, he first had to get the Compact approved before he could attempt to seize the reins.

But, once the Compact was ratified, he was freed to pursue his real agenda.

Under his devious plan of 1791, members of Management would now be able to do anything they desired, *except* those particular things explicitly prohibited.

The two standards used to determine allowable political actions could not be farther apart.

They reached from the most limited on the face of the earth to the most unlimited.

The latter standard allowed *inherent* powers of unimaginable discretion to do as they saw fit, except when prohibited.

Simply put, it was the difference between only being able to do anything you were told you could—to being able to do anything as long as no one said you couldn’t.

Amidst the failure to contain the Cashier’s new standard, he charted a devilish path to transform the country methodically to that of his choosing...and set an example for the hundreds of years to follow.

From then on, each and every issue became a test case, allowing Management to implement the Cashier's insidious new rule. Every few years, the United Franchises were allowed to do more, be more, and rule more, with precious little standing in their way.

Using an allowable means-test of doing anything except as prohibited, the country was transformed, bit by bit over the 226 years to follow.

The young country transformed in fits of rage into a bipolar entity with multiple personalities. At times, she appeared sane, rational and even-keeled. On other occasions, the nation was highly temperamental, delusional, outrageous, and self-destructive.

When members of Management and government officials followed the whole Compact, all was well.

When they acted under the single exception for the District of Colivera—which soon became most of the time—anything could, and typically did, happen.

Although the whole Compact, except one clause, centered upon soccer, a despicable plan was set in motion to allow the United Franchises to begin ignoring most every other clause but that one.

Management, Referees and the Sports Commissioner began to transform American sports into anything they desired.

In other words, absolute tyranny was again set loose on the land.

Chapter 8

The legal sleight of hand was surprisingly simple in theory, even though it was extraordinarily complex in practice.

The Soccer Rulebook actually consisted of *two* rulebooks, *one within the other*.

The First Rulebook—the primary one for the whole Union—contained all the rules for soccer, which were listed in every clause of the Compact, but one.

The Second Rulebook consisted of one single clause that allowed the creation of rules for local sports on exclusive legislative grounds (including the District Seat and “stadiums, lockers, toolsheds, warehouses, and other needful buildings” scattered throughout the country, lands used for the exclusive support of soccer).

Each franchise of the Union authorized *both* Rulebooks when they ratified the United Franchises Compact into existence.

Although all of the franchises allowed for The Second Rulebook—*only the franchise of Maringo provided its actual power*.

After Maringo transferred its own rule-making power for local sports over to Management when it transferred this parcel of land for the District Seat, The Second Rulebook gave General Managers and Head Coaches the power over local sports.

Now they could *make up the rules for all local sports played in the District Seat*. Even though they couldn't lay a finger on nationally-played soccer, they could legally alter all local sports therein played.

No sports authority on the face of the earth had fewer restrictions placed upon its power than members of Management did when it came to the District Seat. The Second Rulebook's only clause, after all, provided that members of Management had the power to act "in all cases whatsoever."

That soccer traditionalists never realized members of Management even had a Second Rulebook to source their powers wholly explained 200 years of failure.

One cannot ignore the existence of The Second Rulebook and then expect to win legal arguments incorrectly asserted to rest only upon The First Rulebook.

The brothers met in the conference room. "How do we limit this arbitrary power?" Barry asked, aghast at the revelations they had discovered.

“First, we expose it,” Brandon said, projecting confidence while thinking privately that he had no idea what to do next. “We must preach to the choir; we inform traditional soccer enthusiasts everywhere, those most interested in our message.

“We show them how a relatively unknown power given to Management for use only in the District Seat was transformed into the engine of Aminican tyranny. All these years, our profound ignorance has been our undoing.

“Soccer traditionalists never understood how Referees were able to transform the clear words of our Compact into their complete opposite.

“That was because Referees did not actually change the meaning of *those* words (about soccer played throughout the Union), because they never had power to do any such thing.

“Instead, they simply made up the rules for local sports *only in the District of Colivera*. Then they successfully misrepresented that these rules applied for the whole country.

“Though Referees are omnipotent when it comes to local sports in the District of Colivera, they are impotent to extend local sports throughout the Union. They absolutely cannot do *what* they allege, *where* they allege.

“In reality, their contorted rules for nationally-played football under rules supposedly delineating soccer are instead sourced not in the Compact, but under rules created by Management only for the District of Colivera and other exclusive legislative properties. Their lie implies that those rules apply everywhere.”

Barry, Brandon and Darren talked for nearly an hour before they were interrupted with “real” work.

It was two days before they had time for another in-depth conversation.

“It amazes me,” Darren said when they met again, “how thinking about The Big Idea helps keep things in perspective.

“I thought about our Constitutional Republic on my way home last night.

“The United Franchises Compact says that every person who was given sports authority has to follow the rules written in the Compact. And, those people don’t have any power to change the rules.

“They must take a solemn, legally-binding oath to support the United Franchises Compact *before* they are allowed to exercise *any* sports authority.

“But, here’s the rub. The District of Colivera is not a Constitutional Republic like the rest of the country. None of the citizens living therein even have legislative representation, like it was in colonial times!

“Even though legislative representation is the fundamental building block of the Republic, the District Seat has none. *That’s when I really understood it was a wholly unique place in all the land.*

“Think about it. None of the people living in the District Seat have ever elected any General Manager or Head Coach to represent *them*. Only residents *of franchises* elect General Managers or Head Coaches.

“And, before the 23rd Addendum was ratified in 1961, no District citizen had ever even voted for Sports Commissioner. They may do that now because the 23rd Addendum says that the District Seat is to be held *as if it were a franchise* for that one purpose.

“But, of course, the District Seat may not be held ‘as if it were a franchise’ for any other purpose.

“Aminicans must learn the vast and inherent difference between the two forms of legal sports authority in Aminica, the vast and inherent difference between franchises and the District Seat.

“The first kind of authority is a Constitutional Republic, which involves the whole Union under The First Rulebook. Besides one clause, the entire United Franchises Compact provides the rules relating to soccer. Of course, each franchise has their own Compact listing therein the rules for *local* sports.

“The second kind of sports authority is a mob-rule Democracy of unlimited powers. Believe it or not, this kind of sports authority is legal in Aminica too—but solely for the District of Colivera and like-jurisdiction properties ceded by franchises to Management. The Second Rulebook allows officials a clean slate of power to do most anything except what the Compact expressly prohibits.

“All our troubles stem from failing to see the vast differences between these two opposing Rulebooks.

“We have to learn how to finally limit all oppressive power that travels *beyond its legitimate confines*.”

The Crawfords continued their quest to discover the final tactics they needed to pound closed the coffin of Aminican tyranny. They sought to ensure it could never again rear its ugly head outside its geographically-limited boundaries.

“I have it!” Brandon exclaimed the morning he got back from another weeklong vacation.

Sensing Brandon’s excitement, his brothers stopped what they were doing and headed to the conference room.

Pausing by the receptionist’s desk, Barry informed her, “Unless it is an emergency, please do not let us be disturbed.”

“I spent a great amount of time last week reading the Compact, studying the basics,” Brandon announced. “Like I expected, it has all the answers we need.

“Since the Framers made the Compact the Supreme Rule of the Land (meaning that all the franchises had to follow its rules) then all of its clauses—including the clause about the District Seat—form part of the Supreme Rule of the Land.

“The Compact also declares that all rules that Management makes *in its support* of the Compact are also the Supreme Rule of the Land.

“Therefore, when Management enacts a sports rule for the District of Colivera, *even those local rules are currently part of the Supreme Rule of the Land!*

“By the strictest words of the strictest principle of The Soccer Rulebook, the local rules for the District of Colivera—as things currently stand—*must be enforced nationwide!*

“Soccer traditionalists have long asserted Progressives ‘re-interpret’ rules ‘*liberally*.’ They are flat out wrong,” Brandon said baldly. “Progressives interpret rules *literally*—so literal, in fact, traditionalists do not even recognize it.

“The secret of our opponent’s amazing success has been to hold two and only two of the Compact’s many clauses up to their *strictest* possible meaning *and then ignore most everything else*.

“That’s why progressive Referees seldom refer to the Compact, even when they allude to words found within its pages.

“They don’t ‘re-interpret’ *those* words of the Compact, for no person empowered to support the game of soccer may ever change its rules.

“Instead of trying to change soccer rules, members of Management sit in their legislative seats in the District Seat and merely make up the rules for local sports, under the single clause *where they actually have the power to do it*. But, then, they cleverly extend that power throughout the Union.

“I think it is safe to say the Framers of The Soccer Rulebook never anticipated local rules for the District Seat being enforced nationwide like they are today.

“When honest people with moral integrity exercise the power given to them by the Compact, there is no conflict between its letter and spirit.

“Sports officials in the District are morally obligated to disclose their rule only pertains to that geographical area. For instance, look at the third and seventh sections of the April 30, 1790 Crime Act.”

Grabbing his pocket Compact from his shirt pocket—to emphasis when its letter could over-ride its spirit—Brandon continued, saying, “United Franchises Security guards may execute throughout the whole Union rules enacted only for the District Seat, even if those laws have no *direct* authority *beyond* the District itself.

“For example, let’s say a person vandalized the District stadium and then fled into a neighboring franchise. In that case, security guards could chase the person anywhere in the Union. That’s what it means to properly extend local D.C. rules enacted by Management ‘throughout the Union.’

“In this case, those security guards would still be acting within both the spirit and the letter of the law. So, this is a great example of how a local District Seat rule applies ‘throughout the Union’—if you break a Management-enacted District rule *within the District*, you can be chased throughout the Union.

“Only rules broken *inside* the District are meant to be enforced nationwide. The only rules meant to apply throughout the Union are those that follow the requirements of the *whole* Compact.

“When corrupt people appear all-powerful—they have merely confused this issue. In this case, they need only muddle the fact that their pet legislation directly applies only in the District Seat.

“Then, they imply their rule is effective for the entire Union—if broken anywhere, it could be enforced everywhere.

“Therefore, to cure these ills, we must ensure the whole Compact finally has its proper effect. In other words, *we must finally restrict the power for the District of Colivera only to its proper geographical confines.*

“By the spirit of The Soccer Rulebook and some 84/85th of its original letter, sports play *between* the franchises is restricted to traditional soccer. Local sports play within the franchises extends to baseball, basketball, and football.

“The only way Management may successfully bypass this absolute principle is to lean upon their exclusive authority for the District Seat under that 85th clause. *There are literally no other options.* Everything else is fluff, mere smoke and mirrors.”

“So, what do you suggest?” Barry asked.

“I see two different roads we could take,” Brandon said.

“The first of our two options is to *CONTAIN* tyranny. The second option is to *REPEAL* it.

Let's examine the first option first.

"The truth is, these United Franchises of Aminica have never properly limited the oppressive power of the District Seat.

"These wild stallions escaped the stable almost from the start because the fences meant to keep them had a gate—a gate that soccer traditionalists never realized existed.

"But, when the stallions got through the gate, they didn't go far—at least initially. They did not want to make it patently obvious how they actually got out, after all—they wanted to continue to come and go as they pleased.

"Each year, the stallions ventured farther and farther from the corral."

"Excuse me," Darren said, feigning the excitement of a young boy. "Are you implying we get to play 'Cowboy,' and round up the wild steeds?"

"You bet," Brandon answered. "And, if they don't come willingly, we will turn them into glue!"

The brothers joked around for a few minutes, lightening the mood before Brandon got back to his story.

“I suggested Containment first,” Brandon said, “because one could argue it is best in line with the original intention of our Founders. So, let’s forget about Repeal for the moment and talk further about Containment so that we don’t confuse the two.

“To Contain their unlimited power—limited only to its rightful *geographic* limitations—we simply follow the example laid down by the 11th Addendum, ratified in 1795.

“This addendum clarifies what to do when words of the Compact are stretched and enforced beyond the Framers’ original intent.

“Anytime members of Management, Referees or the Sports Commissioner get it horribly wrong, the franchises can set them straight with an addendum, just like they did in 1795.

“The 11th Addendum corrected a Referee ruling that—even though it had actually been made without ill intent, nevertheless failed to abide by the franchises’ intentions in its execution.

“If Referees can be corrected when they get it wrong *without* ill intent, surely they can be corrected when they get it wrong *with* ill intent.

“And, my, oh, my; how The Second Rulebook loophole has been horribly expanded, with decidedly ill intent.

“Our new addendum would finally close shut the loophole allowing these people unlimited power, allowing them to thereafter exercise it only where it’s supposed to be exercised—within the geographical confines of the District Seat.

“Containment would simply create a clear exception to the current rule that says the *whole* Compact is the Supreme Rule of the Land.

“In other words, we finally declare that the power of Management to enact exclusive legislation ‘in all cases whatsoever’ *no longer constitutes any part of the Supreme Rule of the Land, under Article VI.*

“After that single change is ratified, local rules in the District Seat will be strictly limited to just the District Seat—just like people already think it is now.

“In effect, members of Management will be forced to step down from their position as national legislators *whenever* they enact a local sports rule. No longer could *any* local rule enacted for the District Seat *ever* affect any kind of nationwide response.

“No rule enacted by any franchise is binding for the Union, nor any other franchise. Well, history easily proves that local District rules should not ever bind the nation, either, even though it happens to be more ‘convenient’ for the District when their rules do bind the nation.

“After the new Containment addendum was ratified, people outside the physical boundaries of the District Seat wouldn’t ever again be held accountable to local District rules.

“The Peculiar Conundrum is resolved in this case by preventing Management-enacted rules for the District Seat from being enforced nationwide.

“The only rules enforced throughout the Union should be the ones that follow the whole Compact, meant to apply throughout the whole Union.

“Guards would still be able to chase nationwide any culprit who allegedly broke one of the Compact’s real rules—the ones meant for the whole Union—of course.

“But, guards will no longer be able to chase culprits nationwide who reportedly break only one of Management’s local rules for the District Seat and then flee the area.

“Alleged culprits who break local rules and then flee will have to be extradited to the District Seat when caught by elsewhere, just like criminals who violate franchise laws are extradited back to the franchise where they committed the crime.

“The institution of formal extradition procedures for the District Seat is almost nothing to ask for the restoration of law and order back to the whole Union.

“The Second Rulebook will no longer be able to be used against every founding principle of our country. Ill-intentioned tyrants who seek to bend the rules to fill their overflowing pockets and to satisfy their bottomless egos will finally be forced into respectable lines of work.

“That’s the way CONTAINMENT would Restore Our American Republic.

“The other route to correct our ills is REPEAL...” Brandon continued, as if to transition to the topic of Repeal, before being interrupted.

“Please, let me absorb this information before discussing the other option,” Barry said, pleading for a mental break.

“I agree,” Darren said with a heavy sigh, trying to comprehend the implications of what he had just heard.

“I do have a question, though,” Barry said, finding what he was hearing hard to believe. “You are not saying this one simple addendum alone will end two hundred years of losing battles, are you?”

“Yes, and no,” Brandon answered. “‘Yes,’ for we would not need anything else.

But, ‘No,’ we should not actually even need a formal addendum in the first place. What we really only need is adequate understanding of what exactly is going on.

“The addendum would fortify the corral and lock shut that infamous gate. It would keep the wild stallions from ever again breaking out, in case the information we’re discussing was ever forgotten.

“These stallions have held a wholly inappropriate free reign long enough. It is way past time to break them of their wild nature, finally controlling them with bridle, reins, impenetrable fences and locked gates.

“But, we shouldn’t actually even need to ratify any addendum in order to actually restore traditional soccer play to the Union.

“That is because the Compact *already specifies* that soccer is the only sport that can be played between franchises and we’ve been tricked into falsely believing otherwise.

“In other words, exposing how tyranny ever subverted our founding principles *should be enough to restore matters all on its own*, because it only operates within a clever loophole.

“Do not underestimate how effectively truth crushes falsehood.

“If the truth of our adversaries’ successful method becomes well-known and widely understood, tyrants won’t be able to continue their deception, even without our new addendum. The addendum would simply better-secure that knowledge for all time.

“As I said, truth coupled with adequate understanding should prevent members of Management, Referees and Sports Commissioners from over-exercising their D.C.-based powers all by itself.

“Think of the damage to a masterful magician’s magic show if someone told the audience mid-show how he actually performed all of his tricks.

“While people evidently do not mind being tricked by their entertainment, none of them want to be tricked by their politicians. The damage done to deceptive political practices would be even greater than the damage that magic show would suffer from full and complete disclosure of their fraudulent methods.

“It is important to keep in mind neither the magician nor politician is actually magical. *Everything* we see in either case is but a masterful illusion.”

“Won’t Referees simply reinterpret your new addendum as they see fit, just like they reinterpret every other clause in The Soccer Rulebook now?” Darren asked, feeling himself inexorably drawn further into the discussion.

“No, absolutely, positively not. You are not getting it yet, Darren,” Brandon said. “Referees rule on plays *according* to The Soccer Rulebook.

“They have no power to change the meaning of any rule listed in the Compact, even though they have successfully implied it for over 200 years. You have been falsely conditioned to believe they have magical powers; but they do not even have one ounce of real magic.

“Let’s take a look at the infamous 1819 Referee ruling on the second national token booths. The Referees ruled that ‘all appropriate means to legitimate ends not prohibited are allowed.’

“In other words, the Referees simply followed the Cashier’s 1791 lead on the first national token booths. Referees did not re-interpret the meaning of the words ‘necessary’ and ‘proper’ found in The Soccer Rulebook, as implied.

“The only thing they did was provide a new definition in the only place *where* they could it, in and for the District Seat.

“Only in the District of Colivera could those words ‘necessary and proper’ have alternate meaning as ‘anything appropriate, except as prohibited.’

“After all, it is not as if words found in the Compact for use throughout the Union cannot have a *different* meaning in the District Seat. Words can have one meaning throughout the Union, but another meaning in the District. Use of words in the Compact does not prohibit a different use in the District Seat.

“Although there may only be four bases in franchise baseball because a franchise Compact designates it, Referees could rule that there were eight bases in baseball in the District because no Compact says otherwise. Similarly, the words ‘necessary and proper’ can have different meanings in the District.

“Until members of Management or Referees provide precise meanings of words *in and for* the District Seat (for local games), after all, *no* words there have any *fixed* legal meaning.

“Or, we can even go back to the landmark ruling of 1803, the one that first established Referee Review. It was not a mere coincidence, after all, that this rule dealt with the grant of a civil commission *for the District of Colivera!*

“Who says Referees don’t have the power they claim, *for the District Seat?*

“Remember, the only franchise with direct authority over the three-miles-square parcel *gave up all its powers over the area in 1791.*

“The whole point of freeing land from franchise control was so that the United Franchises could have a special area of land *where they could do what they thought best!*

“In other words, what goes on in the District of Colivera is purposefully NOT for the several franchises to decide!

“This is directly in line with the Compact which states that the District Seat is within the *exclusive* domain of Management, Referees and the Sports Commissioner to work out, *in all cases whatsoever*, period.

“All these Referee rulings that apply in the District Seat actually have a valid point—members of Management, Referees and Sports Commissioners *don’t have to listen to the separate franchises when deciding what they may do in the District Seat!*

“Conversely, however, what goes on in the *whole United Franchises of Aminica*, is explicitly FOR the franchises to decide and NOT for members of Management, Referees, or the Sports Commissioner.

“For 226 years, Management, Referees and Sports Commissioners have actually been waging battle *only over the District Seat*, even while they falsely implied the war was for the whole Union. But, only their side knew what they were doing.

“We patriots cannot ever ignore any fundamental principle. Without paying strict attention to *every* clause of the Compact, we cannot hope to succeed against adversaries who gain tremendous advantage from our profound ignorance.

“Thankfully for us, there is no such thing as an ‘informal change’ to the United Franchises Compact. Alleged change *changes nothing*.

“Therefore, the United Franchises Compact has only been changed a grand total of 27 times, by the 27 ratified addenda.

“Everything else is but an illusion, *an illusion that may be swept aside with our 28th change!* Everything else only applies in the District of Colivera; everything else may be swept aside.

“We can restore our country—immediately—with our 28th Addendum!

“We need not be satisfied with incremental restoration of our Republic. Our Compact is fully attainable to us, now, in toto.

“Since Referees have no authority to change the meaning of any of the clauses in The Soccer Rulebook, *nothing they have done to date* has actually changed anything that matters.

“Referees ‘reinterpreting’ The Soccer Rulebook has been the biggest fraud ever perpetrated upon Aminica.

“Referees don’t ever *re-interpret* the United Franchises Compact. Instead, they may only make up rules *where* they have that power—in the District Seat!

“Referees have no power to change anything *throughout the Unio*—they are absolutely bound by its term, at all times applicable.

“They only have tremendous discretion for the District of Colivera. Everything they rule that appears to contradict the Compact doesn’t, for it cannot. Everything they rule that appears to contradict the Compact can only apply in the District Seat, not throughout the Union.”

“My head is ready to explode,” Barry said with a heavy sigh. “How about calling it a night and we can meet again tomorrow, maybe at lunch, and pick up where we left off?”

“Sure, we can stop for now,” Brandon replied, with Darren in full agreement.

Chapter 9

“Before you start in, Brandon, I wanted to know your thoughts on the plans promoted by our friends to limit national chaos,” Barry said, as the brothers met again the next day. “You know, things like Term Limits for members of Management and also a Balanced Budget Addendum.”

“Sadly, those plans would fail miserably,” Brandon said.

“Why?” asked Barry, surprised, since Brandon appeared to support those actions in the past.

“Proponents of these avenues only see the symptoms of the problem—not their underlying single cause.

“We must learn from our failures. The people fighting these irrelevant symptoms won’t realize their supposed ‘cures’ only make things worse until it is too late.

“The 17th Addendum is the perfect example.

“Well-meaning citizens who proposed the 17th Addendum argued they needed to break up the ‘Good Old Boy’ network found in the franchise capitols that appointed General Managers. After all, the old method for choosing General Managers appeared to be progressively steering United Franchises sports toward Old World football.

“Proponents of the 17th Addendum failed to realize the true cause of the progressive changes they disliked, however.

“By failing to get to the root problem, the addendum only removed effective oversight over General Managers in the franchise capitols by franchise legislators who elected them, thereafter giving them freer rein to do as they pleased.

“So-called Term Limits would lead to the same failure. General Managers are already restricted to a term of six years; Head Coaches, two.

“Limiting the number of times Management could seek re-election would undoubtedly weaken its members. But, that does not necessarily lessen sports authority *simply being exercised by someone else*.

“Power would undoubtedly simply *shift away* from legislative oversight and voter control *toward* the unelected bureaucracy, where voters hold absolutely no sway.

“In other words, Term Limits would ultimately make matters *worse*—leading to increased tyranny by the Sports Commissioner and his unelected staff.

“We must finally restrict the amount of power *anyone* may exercise.

“Directly restrict the amount of power and length of service will become largely irrelevant, except to thank people for their trustworthy service.

“And, before we start messing with legislative representation, we must first understand the vast differences between legislative members and sports officials.

“Sport officials, including the Commissioner, his staff, and Referees, may be *impeached* by Head Coaches.

“If they are convicted of impeachment by General Managers, they will be removed from office and may even be prohibited from ever holding again any office or public trust.

“However, legislative members may only be *expelled* from their seats by members of their own House.

“There’s a key difference between expulsion and impeachment. Nothing within expulsion prevents a disgraced General Manager or Head Coach from being re-elected by franchise voters.

“In other words, there is an important and historic difference between dealing with unruly legislative members and dealing with oppressive sports officials. The former may be expelled and latter impeached, but franchises may reelect the former while the latter may be forever barred.

“This fundamental difference proves the bottom line—it is wholly improper for any other franchise to tell another franchise *whom they can or cannot choose as their representative*, by ‘term limits’ or otherwise.

“An addendum limiting the number of times a member of Management can hold his or her legislative seat would interfere with the *constituents* choosing whom they want to represent them and for how long.

“It should be noted, however, it is the prerogative of all the franchises acting together to limit the amount of power exercised by anyone.”

“It will take me a while to process your answers,” Barry said, feeling overwhelmed again. “I may have questions about them later. In the meantime, what about the Balanced Budget Addendum?”

“Here’s the thing.” Brandon glanced around the table with an air of getting down to business. “Making it a constitutional mandate that sports authority’s expenses cannot be greater than its income does not directly bring spending under control.

“And, I’ll tell you why. The Balanced Budget Addendum does not directly cap spending. It just says ‘Spending cannot be greater than income.’

“It is vital to realize that saying spending cannot be greater than income does nothing to directly curtail over-spending, nor anything ensuring proper accountability that money is wisely spent.

“The only thing the addendum requires is the end is it would force members of Management to pursue more income anytime spending continued.

“In other words, unabated spending would now *automatically* force members *to raise taxes*.

“The Balanced Budget Addendum ignores the fundamental, underlying problem, but then tying together spending and income, so that income must be increased *anytime spending continues*.

“Anytime one attacks the symptoms instead of the root cause, ill-conceived efforts will prove equally futile.

“The proposed cures end up being worse than the disease, because they don't ever contain, let alone kill, the cancerous root. *They only enflame it*.

“Thus, Term Limits lead to tyranny and Balanced Budget Addendums raise taxes, because those symptoms are not the underlying problem.

“We cannot ignore the fundamental problem and attack irrelevant symptoms and hope things will ever get better. Neither can we accept the present as the proper starting point for fixing things and simply propose something better.

“Doing so would accede to two hundred years of constitutional abuse and neglect.

“Tacking on haphazard, piecemeal ‘cures’ that fail to do their job only strips the Compact of its original consistency while weakening it structurally.

“Remember, Management can source their power from two *different* Rulebooks.

“It would be a fool’s errand to place *further piecemeal restrictions upon The First Rulebook*, only to find them bypassed or short-circuited by The Second Rulebook.

“The terrifying power of The Second Rulebook cannot be *indirectly* limited by The First Rulebook. 226 years of painful experience have clearly proven that effect.

“Any new rules that don’t directly constrain or eliminate tyranny will just be twisted and misconstrued *like the rest of the Compact has been for 226 years!*

“It’s time to finally place appropriate restrictions *directly* on The Second Rulebook.

“We must *finally* contain or repeal the single oppressive clause that allows power to be exercised except as expressly prohibited.

“Tragically, the United Franchises have been increasingly operating under The Second Rulebook over the last 226 years, ever since the Head Cashier pronounced his bold new standard of allowable sports authority in 1791. This power has only escalated over time.

“The Cashier’s unique contribution to Aminica was to pave the unscrupulous pathway to shackle free citizens.

“Things are getting worse. We have failed to comprehend tyranny. As a result, it is enslaving us—and its work is nearly complete.

“Ironically, today we fight the same war our Forefathers fought 241 years ago. They fought a gaggle of foreign sports officials who were exercising unlimited power over them ‘in all cases whatsoever,’ as we do yet, even though the tyrants are now of domestic origin.

“But, guess what? Our Forefathers already *won* that war! War is therefore no longer necessary—now we need only *learn* from our tragic mistakes so that we can finally put sports oppression behind us.

“Our Soccer Rulebook, after all, was our Founders’ *answer* to tyranny and corruption.

“Today, our job is to simply understand our failure to take our opposition’s success into account.

“Our opponents have always known they are frauds. They know they have no power beyond deception masterfully performed.

“They have always avoided the truth, because they know their tactics cannot stand up to it. This is why things have gotten so terribly sinister of late, because those who exercise unlimited power *hate the truth*.

“Truth alone is their enemy.

“People who support unlimited power seek to destroy society. Their evil goal may be difficult to comprehend, but its evidence surrounds us on every front.

“Our oppressors have worked very hard to push society to its breaking point.

“The reason they have obfuscated the Compact is so we would reach one critical point. It’s the place we are now approaching—where every faction out there with any political clout *finally concludes that the United Franchises Compact does not work*.

“If everyone can agree that we need a *new* Rulebook, our oppressors can finally obtain real and lasting power for exercising *throughout the whole Union*.

“In the bargaining process, our oppressors may be forced to concede some of their present power, it is true. But, keep in mind that they have had 226 years of constitutional abuse to boost their current bargaining position. Even if they make major concessions, they will still win the jackpot.

“As things now stand, our oppressors stand to lose every ounce of power they illegitimately hold, if truth was ever properly revealed. That is a chance they cannot take.

“To correct their overreach, we only need to enforce *the current rules in the Compact* while knowing how most of it was ever bypassed in the first place.

“One solitary person who understands the truth, who has the voice and communication skills necessary to simplify and deliver the message far and wide, can end illegitimate power almost overnight.

“Truth is their number one enemy. Our opponents cannot stand in the face of it.

“Even without a sling for offense, a single David can topple a whole army of modern-day Goliaths. He only needs truth, courage and a strong voice.

“We must end their false accumulation of power. To do so, all we must do is expose truth to the purifying light of day. The winds of truth will broadcast its message far and wide.

“One must realize the horrible position in which our modern-day oppressors live. They stand wavering above an abyss into which the truth may at any moment cast them. But, they have hovered there without incident for 226 years, so it is not as uncomfortable of a place as we might imagine.

“This also explains how some of the worst scoundrels rise through the ranks of sports politics and why they seem untouchable by law.

“Corrupt politicians with strong political ties quickly learn to use their intimate knowledge of these circumstances to their considerable advantage. They need only threaten to expose the whole sinful ball of wax if those currently levying unlimited power don’t protect them when their hand is caught in the cookie jar. They demand the opportunity to take themselves as far as their skills and corruption may launch them.

“Their blackmail allows them to leapfrog above others more competent who don’t understand how to leverage such matters for immense personal gain.

“Don’t you realize what this means? We have ensured that the worst men and women of society have a clear path to exercise essentially unlimited amounts of power over us.

“Things are now darker in Aminica than many of the most notorious Old World countries, where their dictators exercise great powers ‘legitimately.’

“In those other countries, their oppressors don’t need to grab more power than they already have. Their power knows few limitations; nothing like our true system.

“That is what our Aminican scoundrels strive toward. They want to ruin the Great Aminican Experiment of limited powers exercised only through necessary and proper means. They want to destroy enumerated government forever.

“We now know those who exercise unlimited power in Aminica are frauds. Our immediate goal is to expose how they operate to our fellow countrymen.

“We need to speak the truth and then make a whole lot of noise,” Brandon concluded decisively. “We want to draw as much attention as possible to the con men standing behind the curtain, hiding from the truth.”

“I am starting to understand!” Barry said jubilantly, as decades of fighting corruption started to come together before his eyes.

“I think I see where you are trying to take us,” Darren said, not yet fully convinced. “But, undoubtedly I will feel better about this once I have had some time for things to sink in.”

“Yes,” Brandon said sympathetically. “This information can be rather overwhelming the first time hearing it. The trick is to avoid giving up, to keep at it until you understand.

“It’s like a puzzle. You’re trying to fit the pieces together, but you’ve never seen the picture on the top of the box. Once you correctly attach more pieces, you’ll start to discover a coherent picture forming before your eyes, where things get easier as you go.

“Never forget that members of Management have *two* different Rulebooks. This information is integral to every action involving corrupt sports politics over the last 226 years.

“Ever since the Head Cashier gave us his 1791 opinion on the constitutionality of token booths, our oppressors have been concentrating only on one or two clauses of the Compact.

“It is imperative to keep in mind that members of Management have no fixed rules for local sports in the District of Colivera and that they have to make up the rules for all local sports played there.

“Management’s only real rule for the District Seat is its own never-ending rule, which allows them to make or change their own rules mid-stream. And, their ‘need’ to act is wholly within their discretion.

“There is no level of action that this truth does not reach or impact.”

“This would probably be a good place to end our discussion for the day,” Barry said, noticing his work piling up. “Maybe, we can pick up this discussion tomorrow morning. It looks like I need to get to some things I shouldn’t put off any longer.”

“Why don’t we meet here at 6:00 a.m.?” Darren asked.

“It may take several hours to go through it all,” Brandon cautioned.

“Okay. How about 5:00 a.m., to make sure we finish on time?” Darren asked.

“Five o’clock it is,” Barry agreed.

“Before we break for the day, I wanted to let you both know Conner got the websites PatriotCorps.org and FoundationForLiberty.org up and operational,” Brandon said.

“Patriot Corps will be our primary organization, accepting donations and publishing our educational material. It will someday take the lead on an addendum, whenever the time proves ripe to begin formal efforts.

“But, some prospective donors would undoubtedly prefer to support a tax-exempt, non-profit charity. Understandably, they’ll want their donations to be tax-deductible.

“The Foundation For Liberty will serve that purpose. It is set up and operational now as a tax-deductible organization aimed solely at educating people about The Peculiar Conundrum.

“Of course, since it’s a tax-exempt non-profit, it cannot directly promote political efforts without getting itself into hot water.

“Hence the need for two organizations, each with its own role.”

“Perfect,” Barry said. “But, people short on money should keep it, because the economy could get worse before it gets better.”

“The truth is, money is actually a poor pinch hitter for real, constructive change,” Brandon said. “Donations should be primarily reserved for those people who have difficulty giving *their time*.

“Yes,” Barry said. “We would far more prefer people *offer their help*. Of course, if they can give both—time and money—that would be great.”

“And, ‘help’ doesn’t necessarily mean the Patriot Corps or Foundation For Liberty. It means to genuinely help the cause of liberty by helping people get adequately informed as to what is truly going on.

“Having a number of different fronts to attack corruption can be beneficial, especially when our opposition is so highly centralized. No sense giving our powerful opponents a single target, after all.”

Chapter 10

After a restless night, the Crawford brothers met at the plant early the next morning.

Lauren walked in with Brandon.

“To what do we owe this honor, Lauren?” Barry asked, surprised to see his sister-in-law.

“Brandon told me when he got home that he had to be at work today at 5:00 a.m.,” Lauren said. “I was intrigued to know what would compel you men to meet so blasted early in the morning. So, I began quizzing him.

“He filled me in on your recent discoveries. He said he was going to speak this morning about how he thinks soccer and sports freedom can be restored.

“He said enough for me to know that I wanted to be here to hear it. I was going to call Natalie and Julia, to invite them, but Brandon said I probably shouldn’t call them at 11:00 p.m. to invite them to the 5:00 a.m. meeting.”

“Probably a wise move on your part,” Barry said, surprised that Lauren would even consider calling so late. “But, we’ve been looking for answers for decades, Lauren. You have only shown moderate interest to date, but now you show up here at 5:00 a.m. What’s changed?”

“You men found the answer!” Lauren said. “Things now make sense. And, that makes all the difference in the world.

“There is finally something for me to do. *I can get informed and then tell everyone I meet.* I get to spread the word that tyrants don’t ever want mentioned in public. I can help Restore Our Aminican Republic, in my own way!”

The four patriots wasted no time getting to the heart of the discussion.

“As I said yesterday, there is a second course of action we could take,” Brandon said. “This course is more direct, easier to understand, and offers none of the wiggle room Containment might, since Containment allows tyranny to continue existing, even if it is finally confined to its rightful location.

“REPEAL.” Brandon announced boldly. “Repeal is the fail-safe method to restore our Republic and keep it safe from those who try to oppress us.

“Once we repeal The Second Rulebook, it will shut down tyranny instantaneously. It would be like hitting the Red Button Kill Switch on the master control panel, stopping the 226-year slide away from the United Franchises Compact overnight.

“We would wake up the morning after ratification with a fully-restored Compact.

“After Repeal, the United Franchises sports authority would always be strictly limited and the Compact sternly enforced, and it could not ever be expanded outside of ratified addenda.

“After Repeal, it would matter little who filled sports authority positions, since every person swears an oath to support the United Franchises Compact. They would finally have only the ‘necessary and proper’ means to implement the enumerated powers that are specifically detailed within the Compact.

“But, here’s the rub. This route requires legislative majorities to vote accordingly—super, super majorities, in fact—which is no small thing.

“In this case, we simply work towards *repealing* Management’s ability to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever—over any territory, anywhere.

“Remember, we have two options for moving forward.

“The first is to push forward with ‘Containment.’ Containment would finally provide the proper response to an 1821 Referee ruling that asked for soccer traditionalists to ‘show’ the ‘safe and clear rule’ in the Compact that supports their contention that rules enacted by Management in pursuance of D.C.-based power don’t actually ‘bind the nation.’

“But, we couldn’t ‘show’ this safe and clear rule, because non actually existed. There was only the spirit of the Compact, but our opponents used the strict letter of the Compact successfully against its spirit.

“Our 28th Addendum of Containment would finally ‘provide’ the missing rule, saying unequivocally that rules enacted by Management for D.C.-based power don’t bind the nation.

“But, besides Containment, our other option is to pursue ‘Repeal’ of Management’s exclusive legislative jurisdiction in total. It would erase the District Seat and a continued ability of Management to exercise unlimited powers *anywhere*.

“Our 28th Addendum of Repeal would eliminate the need for Referees to even ask that 196-year old question first posed in 1821. We wouldn’t need to show the safe and clear rule that D.C.-based powers don’t bind the nation, because no longer would there even be any D.C.-based powers, because no longer would there even be a D.C.!

“Our 28th Addendum of Repeal would be the modern-day equivalent to the Founders’ Freedom Proclamation. It would forever end a sports authority that claimed the absolute power to bind the nation against the people’s will and without their consent ‘in any case whatsoever.’

“Thankfully, we needn’t today go to war to make our proclamation binding—we only need to ratify our 28th Addendum of Repeal.

“Just like the 21st Addendum repealed the 18th Addendum, our 28th Addendum would simply repeal the arbitrary power of Management.

“Remember, the 18th Addendum had been added to our Compact to prohibit alcohol from being served in stadiums and sporting fields throughout the Union.

“Then came the black markets. Covert rings of suppliers smuggled their intoxicating product into sports arenas to sell alcohol to thirsty sports fans on the down low. This troubling trend began to empower a whole new breed of corrupt stadium officials who were paid handsomely to look the other way for what seemed a rather trivial matter. After all, alcohol had been allowed before, so it couldn’t be all that bad, they reasoned.

“When we realized Prohibition gave corruption a foothold in our country, we repealed it by ratifying the 21st Addendum.

“Now it’s time for Aminicans to repeal the far greater source of corruption.

“The simplicity of Repeal is its own beauty. No longer will any Aminican need to keep every rule and regulation on the tip of their tongue to be able to fight for their freedom. No one will need to comprehend how the rules of The First Rulebook could be bypassed using The Second Rulebook.

“Rather than trying to muscle tyranny back into its proper confines, keeping it alive, we obliterate it, we crush it, we annihilate it out of existence forevermore. Sports oppression would never again be allowed, not even one square foot of Aminican soil.

“Repealing the clause that allows an exclusive legislative District Seat to exist would necessitate changes, of course. Obviously, *someone else* would thereafter have to control local sports play in the land that had previously been the District Seat.

“That leads us to another fork in the road. There are two choices under the option of Repeal. The former District Seat could either join an existing franchise or form its own new franchise.

“If the District Seat joined a franchise, it would make the most sense for them to rejoin Maringo through a process called ‘Retrocession.’

“Retrocession would extend throughout the franchises. Any land under exclusive legislative jurisdiction that was used to support United Franchise soccer—like stadiums, lockers, toolsheds, ware-houses and other needful buildings scattered

throughout the franchises—would take part in Retrocession movement. These areas would return to the franchise that originally ceded the lands.

“With Retrocession, Maringo would take back its toolsheds, lockers, etc., like every other franchise would take back theirs.

“But, unlike other franchises, under full Retrocession, Maringo would also enfold the District Seat back into its boundaries, since it originally ceded that land so many years ago.

“Then, Maringo’s Compact would provide franchise rules for local sports in the former District Seat, which would become just a regular part of Maringo.”

“I don’t see any huge issues with giving these ‘enclave’-type lands back to the franchise that originally transferred them to Management,” Lauren said.

“This strategy has plenty of precedent behind it,” Brandon said. “The only difficulty is for tyrants that don’t want to lose control of two hundred years of accumulated power. Undoubtedly, many of them and their supporters will do everything under the sun to oppose it.

“But, before we get to the opposition, let me first present the other way forward with Repeal.

“To recap—there are two major options to end The Peculiar Conundrum, that strange world where founding principles and enumerated powers do not necessarily coincide.

“The first option we discussed was Containment. The second is Repeal.

“Repeal takes us down two possible pathways, depending on who should support local games, at least for the District Seat.

“The first choice under the option of Repeal is Retrocession, which we just discussed. It returns local sports authority to the franchise that originally transferred the land.

“The second choice recognizes that the District of Colivera has enough people and enough local sports administration structure outside of Management to become its own local sports administration.

“Under this choice, the District of Colivera would be allowed to form its own franchise.

“The new franchise, call it ‘New Colivera’ or whatever name you like, would join the Union as the 14th franchise. It would draft its own franchise Compact and enter the Union on an equal footing with all the other franchises.”

“Which choice do you like under the option of Repeal?” Barry asked.

“Well, it can be argued either way,” Brandon responded thoughtfully. “Maybe it would be wisest to leave it up to the citizens of the District.

“In either case, District residents would finally have the legislative representation guaranteed to every franchise of the Union—which they do not have now (because they are an exclusive legislation ‘district’ and not a ‘franchise’). They would either join Maringo (and be represented by her representatives that they could now help chose) or they would form their own franchise (and vote for their own representatives).

“But, the truth is, our primary concern is not really with the thousands of people currently living within the District Seat without representation.

“Our primary concern must be *every* Aminican throughout the Union. The end goal is to boot tyranny from the land however we can.

“The United Franchises are no longer weak and feeble like they were in 1783. Members of Management no longer have to worry about protecting themselves from a small group of citizens or even from whole franchises ganging up on them.

“In other words, we no longer need exclusive legislative grounds.

“Even after Repeal, Management and the United Franchises would still oversee United Franchises soccer played in the United Franchise stadiums.

“The United Franchises could perhaps even continue to own the properties the United Franchises stadiums sat on, but they would no longer hold exclusive sports authority over that or any land. They would share their sports authority with the franchises according to all the Compact’s standard divisions, but without any longer an exclusive District Seat.”

“So, Brandon, do you like the option of Containment or Repeal better?” Barry asked.

Pausing for a moment, Brandon answered, “At first, I preferred *Containment*, because it’s closest to the original plan of our Forefathers. But, I didn’t initially realize the difficulty other people would have understanding the concept. When I first brought it up with you two, I saw this terrified look of bewilderment—a deer-in-the-headlights kind of look.

“Well, if studied men, well-versed in Aminican history and the Compact, have difficulty comprehending Containment, imagine how hard it would be for people who know nothing about it.

“*Repeal* is much simpler to understand, because we don’t need go into anywhere near as much detail for people to be able to understand things for the long run.

“With Repeal, we ‘only’ need to explain enough to get knowledgeable people on board so that the franchises can ratify an addendum.

“Everything said, now I would probably recommend Repeal, for both its simplicity and finality. Ignorance in this country is simply too widespread to think most people will learn the principles involved. Given how much harm this clause has caused over the last 226 years, we must prevent tyranny a continued foothold any way, shape or form we can.”

“But, the pushback from eliminating 95% or more of the current bureaucracy will undoubtedly be enormous,” Darren exclaimed.

“To the extent that proves true, it may give us enough bargaining power to instead compromise with Containment,” Barry said. “Containment will correct matters sufficiently that I would be absolutely, positively, thrilled to ‘settle’ for that result.

“Those currently exercising this awesome amount of power would undoubtedly still prefer a small area to exercise it, over none at all. Thus, they may be willing to concede at some point.

“But, we should never forget, our opposition has no real way to fight this.

“Our opponents will undoubtedly ignore us for as long as possible, to prevent giving our message any credence.

“But, once our message starts to gain traction, they will find out they can no longer ignore the issue.

“At that point, they will try to confuse our message and attack our credibility.

“This is the age of the Internet, however; a freeing force strongly preferential to decentralized communication and disseminated information.

“I don’t think our opponents will be able to stop this outward flow of information, especially since so many people are looking for a solution. They might be able to stop some people from finding out about us, but they won’t be able to stop them all.

“Our primary effort, at least for now, is merely to expose the truth. Exposure doesn’t require legislative majorities.

“Any formal proposal and ratification of an addendum would come later, much later. When the time comes, we’ll figure out which route is the most promising.

“Rome wasn’t built in a day, and thankfully, ratification isn’t necessarily a time-critical event either. After all, the 27th Addendum, finally ratified in 1992, was actually proposed in 1789, 203 years earlier!

“Therefore, we need not necessarily start over every election season—we can just gain ground every day until the addendum is ratified!”

“Excellent point, Barry,” Brandon said.
“Excellent point.”

“But, ratifying addenda are tough,” Darren interjected. “Right now, I don’t think even one of our fellow soccer traditionalists would see any value in our addendum.

“Let’s not underestimate the challenge here. We *are* talking about ratifying an addendum, an event which has only happened 27 times in our history.”

“True and true,” Brandon said. “The first thing you said just explained The Peculiar Conundrum’s spectacular success—the entire topic sounds wholly innocuous if not completely immaterial.

“Soccer traditionalists believe that the District of Colivera’s power is already restricted to that geographical area. But, they are tragically mistaken. The true problem does not even show up on their radar.

“That is what we must do—we must put it on their radar. It is our burden to show our fellow patriots how they have been duped, by failing to critically-examine every credible possibility.

“I would say to them, ‘Don’t you think we’ve lost enough ground, that we shouldn’t examine *every* possible path forward?’

“Now, about the difficulty of ratifying an addendum, Darren; I see this as a glass ‘half-empty’ situation. History shows us that 27 addenda have already been ratified.

“To me, doing something a 28th time hardly sounds impossible. Especially when our 28th Addendum is the most important thing we can ever do.”

“Most important thing we can ever do?” Barry repeated, incredulously.

“Yes, no question about it,” Brandon announced gravely. “That is why I call it my ‘Once and For All Addendum,’ because it will change things, once and for all.

“What can be more politically-significant than our Compact? Nothing; it is the Supreme Rule of the Land.

“But, ironically, our Compact began being ignored on the basis of only two of its clauses only two years after its new sports authority began.

“Those two clauses are, of course—The Second Rulebook (the clause allowing Management the exclusive power to legislate for the District Seat in all cases whatsoever) and the Supremacy Clause (Article VI, Clause 2, which designated all of Management’s rules made in support of the Compact ‘Supreme Rules of the Land’).

“Sure, many other clauses keep the United Franchises running.

“For example, the ones dealing with electing members of Management and the Sports Commissioner. Likewise, clauses for filling appointments including Referees and senior staff.

“But, once these sports authority positions are filled, even those clauses become largely irrelevant until the positions empty again.

“Other than filling sports authority positions, then, The First Rulebook may be ignored by The Second Rulebook. Special circumstances are supposed to apply, but we have long since forgotten how to enforce those restrictions.

“So, my question is—if most of The First Rulebook may be ignored most of the time, how could *anything else* be more important than finally making the *entirety* of The First Rulebook applicable *at all appropriate times, if not at all times?*

“‘Containment’ makes The First Rulebook applicable at all *appropriate* times, ‘Repeal’ makes it applicable at *all* times.

“One of these two changes *has to be the single most important thing we can ever do*, TO GET BACK OUR WHOLE COMPACT!

“Aminicans have properly celebrated The Soccer Rulebook for 228 years, but for 226 of them, there has been a tragic but clever means to bypass almost all of it.

“Arrogant General Managers and Head Coaches occasionally boast that the Compact is largely irrelevant in their day-to-day actions. Soccer traditionalists go nuts when they hear that assertion, calling it ‘ludicrous’ and calling the people who make such assertions all sorts of filthy names.

“But, do you know what? Those members of Management are right. They may legally ignore the bulk of the Compact—*whenever they operate under the power for the District of Colivera*. Their power for that area did not come from the Compact, after all, but from Maringo.

“The Compact was never meant to define or limit the local powers members of Management could exercise in the District Seat under their power received from Maringo.

“If the sovereign powers for Management for the District Seat came from Maringo, why would members of Management need to look to the United Franchise Compact to act under the District’s powers (at least beyond looking to the single clause that specifically agrees with their fundamental position)?

“It is up to traditionalists to finally figure out what is going on and right this sinking ship.

“The truth of the matter is that no addenda to The First Rulebook will ever fix this mess unless *it directly constrains or eliminates The Second Rulebook*.

“That is why Term Limits, the Balanced Budget Addendum, and similar proposals *will never work*. That is why the 17th Addendum only made things worse.

“There’s no point in adding anything to the Compact *just so it can also be ignored*.

“Importantly, also, we must never look at our Compact as a list of negative actions which members of Management, Referees and Sports Commissioners cannot perform.

“That is the fundamental error of falling into the Head Cashier’s trap, of a form of government of unlimited powers *except as prohibited*.

“One can never limit power via that means, because there are simply too many creative ways bureaucrats can bypass those weak chains.

“Instead, we must maintain correct principles—living under the Compact that lists the *enumerated* powers which members of Management may implement only using necessary and proper means.

“Sadly, however, those limited powers for the whole Union are already being ignored by use of The Second Rulebook.

“Adding more clauses to their number cannot change matters.

“So, let’s finally make the *whole* of the Compact again relevant, so members of Management and Referees are finally forced to pay proper attention to *every* clause of the Compact, not just their favorite one or two.

“We must finally Contain or Repeal The Second Rulebook.”

“Okay, okay,” Barry said, never so pleased to be wrong. “I happily concede your point.”

“Remember,” Brandon said. “What good are *any* of the original clauses, if scoundrels can ignore them at will simply by working within a special exemption?

“Nothing can be more important than finally closing this loophole and making the whole of the Compact again binding, now without exceptions.

“We need to follow the rules for the whole Union that all the franchises approved when they ratified the Compact, not follow the local rule-making authority ceded by only one franchise without much protection against the exercise of nearly unlimited powers.

“To win, we only need to show why our 28th Addendum *should eventually be ratified*.”

“I would like to add, Darren,” Barry said. “Don’t overestimate our opponents’ ability to withstand the truth. They don’t really have anywhere near as much power as they would like us to believe.

“Our biggest challenge will be simplifying our message to get people *who are already on our side* to understand this problem.

“All we need to do to change the course of history is preach to the choir. We don’t need to battle with adversaries who seek to exercise exclusive authority over us in all cases whatsoever, at all times. That war was fought 241 years ago and guess what? Our side won.

“Our Forefathers already ended that tyranny *throughout the franchises*. Now, we need only close the clever loophole in our Compact that Management has exploited beyond all measure.

“Our opponents have no direct defense against the truth of their exploitation. Their only defense is to confuse the issue, which they’ve done successfully for 226 years.

“It is vital to remember that every person exercising sports authority must first swear an oath to support the Compact. If they haven’t, they are under a superior who has and who is obligated to ensure each of his subordinates supports the Compact.

“The fact that every person with sports authority must support the Compact means our side has *already won*. Now that we understand how our opponents succeeded, everything has changed. It’s time to change our tactics to match reality.

“Since the oath members of Management take *already extends to support of the whole Compact*, people of integrity, even at the progressive end of the political spectrum, will realize it is wrong to follow only one or two clauses *while ignoring all the others*.

“People of integrity will immediately feel compelled to do the right thing, once they know what it is, even if they personally preferred otherwise, if it were up to them.

“But—decidedly—it is not up to them. It is they who must conform to the Compact they swore to support, *the whole thing*. If they don’t like it, they can seek to ratify new addenda. Until they do, however, they must support the Compact *as written*.

“The Compact as written favors us, even while it allows our opponents to do what they do in its strictest form, but only for a small area, and only as long as few people understand what is really going on. But, continued exploitation can only last as long as few people understand what those scoundrels are doing. Exposing what is being done will short-circuit those deceit-ridden actions, causing our opponents to implode.

“Our immediate goal is to disseminate the truth as widely as possible, showing how corruption was able to take root in the land of sports freedom.

“If we have to, we will teach one person at a time. We will point out the truth in the clearest way possible, and then make a whole lot of noise to draw attention to it.

“In the short-term, we ignore the daunting challenge of working toward legislative majorities.”

“I agree,” Barry said. “Americans are a creative bunch; there will be as many ways to draw attention to the fraud as the people working to expose it. The path to success will become clearer over time.

“At present, we chip away at falsehood with the truth. We don’t stop until falsehood’s fragile foundation crumbles to the ground, as it inevitably must, because lies cannot withstand truth whenever it is adequately voiced.”

“Won’t progressives just enact their own addenda, finally giving themselves real power?” Darren asked.

“You mean like they could have theoretically done at any point along the last 226 years?” Brandon answered. “Progressives did not seek this direct approach *for a reason*. They knew no one would stand for it, *at least until things got so bad that their proposals started to sound better than current conditions*.

“This is why progressives have been undermining American society, driving it to the edge of a cliff they mean to push us over.

“If we fail to educate our fellow Americans about the truth, the route that troubles you is precisely where our opponents are trying to go. It is up to us to stop them.

“Again, our opponents’ strategies simply place a greater burden upon us to succeed.

“Do you really think that the franchises, once they realize that the last two hundred years have been full of betrayal, would ever reward those seditious tactics by granting our opponents *more power*?

“I certainly don’t. If we succeed, I imagine we will hear renewed calls to tar and feather anyone standing in the way of our Once and For All Addendum.

“In fact, smart operators who are currently in the opposition camp will see the seas of opinion changing, rushing towards them from every conceivable angle. The smartest will change along with it.

“The loudest calls for change will inevitably come from some of our most vocal opponents today. Their desire to climb the ladder of political success will compel them to switch to the winning side, because that’s the only way they will have a chance to

continue to exercise any sports authority in the future. They will seek to lay the blame on proponents who are long-dead and can no longer speak for themselves.

“The history books will be rewritten and they will not be kind to the scoundrels who came before and turned Aminica upside down.

“The first Head Cashier will top the list, followed by the most prominent of the early Referees.”

“I can see your point,” Darren said, “at least as far as it relates to the point in time after we start to gain traction. But, what about before then? I believe it will be very dangerous for us.

“Once we start making waves, but before we gain any real political or media clout, our opponents might try to make an example out of us.

“They could easily send in every regulatory agency to attack Crawford Shoes because of our personal political efforts.

“Employers are already considered evil-opportunists who exploit their employees and rip off their customers.

“Crawford Shoes is a *factory*,” Darren said. “We make things. Production takes effort, sweat and capital. Equipment has the potential to be dangerous, even when we take every reasonable precaution to make sure it’s safe.

“We have Employee Handbooks, Accident Prevention Plans, Good Manufacturing Practices, Hazard Analysis Plans, Worker Protection Standards, Material Safety Data Sheets, Lock-Out-Tag-Out Protocols and Devices, Confined Space Procedures, Workplace Safety Books, etc. You name it, we have it. And, the list goes on and on.

“But, the regulations that go along with all those standards are endless,” Darren continued helplessly. “Many even contradict one another. They are intentionally made to be all but impossible to follow, certainly at least every single time. How can you follow the rules consistently when the rules are not even consistent with one another?

“Last year we received a \$50,000 confined space violation. Yes, the penalty was later reduced, but the procedures they wanted us to implement to ‘cure’ our non-existent problem were arguably more dangerous than our old way of doing things. For four decades, we’ve done it our way and no one has ever gotten hurt.

“But, try telling that to the sandal-wearing, paper-pushing bureaucrat fresh out of college who wrote us up. We couldn’t get her to listen to reason. All she would do is quote rules that supposedly apply in every situation but, of course, cannot.

“Just imagine the inspections and fines we would receive if we took on the establishment head on. They’d shut us down in a year.” Darren said, regretting the need to deliver these sobering points. He took a deep breath and continued.

“They would pressure our customers, vendors, and employees to turn against us. They would feed the media a consistent line that no matter our past reputation, Crawford Shoes was now being run by liars, cheats, and frauds.

“We would inevitably lose our business and our reputation. The Crawford name would be dragged through the mud.”

The brothers looked at one another, knowing Darren was right. The nature of their business exposed them to these kinds of underhanded tactics from a ruling class desperate to remain in power. Since the Crawford’s message couldn’t be directly attacked, their opponents would target the Crawford’s vulnerability—their business.

The opposition seemed to have so much power—yet when push came to shove, it was all smoke and mirrors. Nevertheless, Management and government officers would be forced to defend their political position or die politically.

And, they would not likely die without a fight.

The information the Crawford brothers held would forever end the status quo. There were no other tricks up their opponent's sleeves, despite the rhetoric. The opposition would stop at nothing to keep that information hidden and misunderstood.

For decades thus far, the primary cost of the brothers' pursuit of knowledge had been their time and perhaps a lowered standard of living from diverting much of their attention from their livelihood.

Their recent discoveries had happened so fast that they hadn't really thought through all the ramifications.

The brothers sat there silently, not knowing what to think.

Finally, Barry said, "I think we need to slow down and look at all the possible ramifications before we do anything rash.

"At this stage of our lives, we cannot afford to leap without first thinking. We have to be smart and decide what is best before we act."

Chapter 11

The brothers didn't discuss their situation for several weeks. Each of them reviewed their options at home with his family.

By the third week, they were as ready as they would ever be to come together to develop a path forward.

They scheduled a meeting for noon Friday, so they could talk all afternoon and then have the weekend to ponder matters before meeting again.

Even the best-laid plans, they discovered, could change drastically without notice, however.

Just before midnight on Wednesday, Barry picked up the phone to hear the local Fire Captain's grave voice on the other end of the line.

"I am sorry to inform you, Mr. Crawford," the Captain said. "But, Fire District 5 has three fire crews battling a spectacular blaze at the Crawford Shoes factory right now."

Barry was in shock. He called his brothers, waking them up from sleep. They met at the foot of the burning building.

Their first sight was of flames, flames leaping from the windows and out of the roof 20 feet into the air.

Factory workers started showing up at 6:30 a.m. for their 7:00 a.m. shift, astonished at the destruction that lay before them. They knew the heartbreaking sight did not bode well for their jobs.

It was 9:00 in the morning before the blaze was contained.

After the fire was extinguished and the site finally cooled, fire and insurance investigators carefully sifted through the debris. Together they figured out that the glue pot used for gluing up shoe boxes developed an electrical short, causing the fire.

The sparks spread to a stack of empty boxes nearby and then to the structure itself.

Between the fire, smoke and water, the entire building, including machinery and inventory, was a total loss.

Before the insurance company would settle, they scoured the financial records and checked with vendors to confirm Crawford Shoes had no visible signs of financial distress.

Without evidence of accelerants or anything else suggesting arson, insurance officials wanted to settle quickly, so that they could close the claim before any more losses could be identified.

After the large check arrived, the brothers sat down at Barry's house for a meeting to figure out where to go next.

"I have to say," Barry said, admitting to his troubling dilemma before the life-altering fire. "I was visibly distressed by having to decide between Crawford Shoes and our fight for freedom.

"I don't know if I would have been willing to see Crawford Shoes sullied or taken from us if we chose to battle powerful political adversaries while still owning the factory.

"One moment I was ready to take on the world and the next I wanted to run and hide so I wouldn't have to make the decision."

"I know what you mean," Darren said. "I was in the same boat. I would like to say I was leaning toward fighting for freedom, but when it came down to it, I mean...I don't know. I was scared and I honestly didn't know what to think or choose."

"Perhaps, the fire was a blessing in disguise," Brandon said. "I know I prayed to God to give me the strength to make the right call. Today, we have a much easier decision than the one we faced weeks ago.

"Now, it is quite easy for me to decide to fight with all of my future might," Brandon said solemnly to his brothers sitting at the table.

“I would love to rebuild our company from the ground up,” Darren said, the youngest of the brothers. “But, I am young enough that maybe we could even rebuild after we succeed in freeing the country.”

“We have to realize that this fight may last a whole lot longer than any of us hope,” Barry said. “The status quo is incredibly hard to change, even when it has to.

“In the meantime, however, we still find ourselves in the unfortunate position of potentially having our assets used against us.

“Our fear of losing what we have could easily short-circuit our fight if we are not careful. I don’t know many people who can stand to lose all their material possessions without a deep sense of sorrow.

“No one could take our factory from us if we don’t rebuild it, but our money is perhaps still vulnerable to a desperate sports authority that is used to acting without restriction.

“I suggest the best way to protect our financial future is to give up on the idea of using our insurance payout to rebuild Crawford Shoes.”

“What do you mean?” asked Darren with obvious distress in his voice, since that had been his game plan.

“If we keep this pot of money in our own names, so we could theoretically draw from it now or in the future to rebuild the factory, it would be an open invitation to our powerful rivals to come and take it, one way or another. It would be just another way for them to keep us from succeeding or punishing us,” Barry answered.

“I think each of us should think about creating an irrevocable family trust and putting most of our money in it, adding in our houses. We name an independent trustee to manage the trusts for all of our family members and their offspring.

“Establishing the trusts would separate us from our wealth and its control. We wouldn’t own our houses, but we would still be able to live in them. We wouldn’t control our money, or how it was spent, but we would still be able to benefit from it much the same.

“Anyone coming after us personally would find we didn’t own anything. And, as an added bonus, our estate planning would already be settled.”

“Are you really willing to let some trustee decide what to do with your assets—the results of your life’s work?” Darren asked incredulously.

“First of all, we would designate the parameters trustees would have to follow,” Barry said. “I must ask you in return, however; are you really willing to let some faceless bureaucrat use your assets against you, making you choose between your assets and political success?”

“If you expect a nasty fight, why not limit the potential damage now, when no one is coming after your assets?”

“Taking these steps now, when things are calm, is good financial planning. Trying to protect your money in the midst of chaos, however, could easily lead to losing it or getting sent to prison for doing something foolish.”

“There is wisdom in taking as strong of a defensive stance as possible,” Brandon said, pleased they were working out these strategies now, with plenty of time to think before they would need to act.

“You know, Darren,” Barry said, “you won’t take anything with you when you pass from this earth. You leave behind only a legacy. Wealth and property are great while you’re alive, but we can still protect them even as we work to create a legacy. It’s an enviable legacy, too. We would be standing up for our core principles against seemingly impossible odds, for the good of the whole country,” said Barry, finishing his moving speech.

“I’m not going to like this near as much as I would prefer to stay in control,” Darren conceded. “But, I also realize that a trust is so much better than losing my assets in a political fight against these horrible tyrants.”

“Perhaps control itself is an illusion,” Brandon said thoughtfully. “Three weeks ago, we all thought we were in control. Today, we know better.”

“Okay,” Darren said, resigning himself to the plan. “You’ve convinced me. I’m in, but I still need to convince Julia.”

“You know, I just had a thought,” Brandon said. “An orchardist understands that he has to prune his fruit trees every year. Any gardener worth his salt knows the benefit of pulling weeds and deadheading spent flowers.

“Our fire may have been more than just a helpful means for us to come to the right decision. It may have also foreshadowed of our strategy forward—we need to figuratively burn away everything that detracts from proper sports authority.

“Right now, things are now so overgrown that selective thinning won’t be enough. We will need to burn away vast swaths of invasive scrub brush. While the scrub brush will burn and shrivel away, a valuable tree’s thick bark will ensure that it will survive to enjoy the sun and water without continuing interference from noxious weeds.”

“Great point,” Barry said. “We need to prove political pruning is even more important than forest management or agricultural pruning, metaphorically speaking, for our country’s future success.

“I’ll contact Legacy Law and Estate Planning; they are supposed to be experts in corporate law and I hear they create impenetrable trusts.”

The brothers agreed to protect their wealth with trusts and to divert all their attention towards restoring the whole of the United Franchises Compact.

The Crawford brothers invited their former employees and employee spouses to a grand dinner celebrating the life and times of Crawford Shoes.

The dinner was a cross between a memorial service and comedy roast; pictures were shown and short speeches given to roast the partners and toast the employees.

The most senior employee was the emcee, a man who was quite the jokester and who had the most stories to tell. 34 years earlier, he had started at Crawford Shoes as a dockhand and over time he rose through the ranks to become the shipping manager.

Each employee got a check equivalent to a month of pay for each year they had worked at the company. The payout would help the former employees cushion their finances while they were looking for a new job, which the brothers vowed to help them find.

Two months later, the family trusts were set up, funded, and independent trustees named.

The Crawford families met together for a weeklong getaway and mapped out their final game plan.

Barry would head the Foundation For Liberty and concentrate on its tax-exempt educational work, with Natalie taking a major role within the Foundation to help him.

The Foundation was already set up and operational. It was a straightforward charitable organization, aimed at educating citizens about the founding principles of the country and showing them how those principles had been cleverly subverted.

The Foundation accepted tax-deductible gifts to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Brandon would head the Patriot Corps, with aid from Lauren, Darren, Julia, Conner, Shelly and Billy. This organization would take longer to set up, since it had to work through a number of unique business strategies.

Since the non-profit Foundation For Liberty was prohibited by its tax-exempt status from actively promoting legislation, the Crawfords didn't see the advantage of setting up yet another non-profit organization to promote their 28th Addendum when the time came.

Another non-profit, even if donations to it weren't tax deductible, could only follow the typical top-down, central command and control approach, which didn't appeal to the brothers on any number of levels.

The Crawford brothers were unabashedly entrepreneurial and fiercely pro-market. They didn't like the message non-profits otherwise implied, that "profit" was somehow harmful or evil.

The Crawfords' underlying problem with setting up the Patriot Corps as another non-profit entity was that it would mean they couldn't use the profit incentive to solve troubling issues.

And, what could be more problematic than restoring a lost country?

The idea of rewarding the patriotic efforts of individuals appealed to the Crawford brothers, who had personally experienced fairly extensive costs in three decades of patriotic efforts. They wanted to change that.

After all, the other side had thousands of full-time employees dedicated to promoting a central sports authority. And, their taxpayer-funded salaries were nothing to sneeze at.

In contrast, on the same side of promoting liberty as the Patriot Corps were a meager lot of moderately-paid employees who worked for free market think tanks supported by donations. Of course, there were also scores of dedicated part-time volunteers looking to make a difference any way they could.

The Crawfords thought of a way to even out the score of this lopsided affair, on the side for freedom, but with a twist.

The for-profit Patriot Corps would operate much like a non-profit, even freely releasing all of its materials into the public domain.

The information would be released to ensure that anyone could freely access it, to make it difficult to ever censor.

Undoubtedly, some readers would be inspired to support the Patriot Corps' worthy efforts. Some of them might even be willing to donate to its cause or become supporting members.

And, some of those members may be interested in learning more about Aminica's founding principles. Perhaps, they would even like to know the best ways to pass that information on to others.

Undoubtedly, more than a handful would be willing to pay a small fee to receive help learning how to restore the country.

Brandon had always been intrigued by the unceasing, almost religious fervor with which multi-level marketers zealously pushed their product.

Brandon sought to tap into that enthusiasm with the Patriot Corps, but without using multi-level marketing techniques which too closely resembled unscrupulous pyramid schemes for his taste.

However, to the extent Patriot Corps would model MLM tactics, it would seek to invert the pyramid-shaped structure on its head, allowing those at the bottom to come out on top.

The planned structure of the Patriot Corps would be to accept dues-paying members.

A person could choose to be a dues-paying member simply to support Patriot Corps' worthy efforts or receive special communications sent only to members.

Like-minded patriots could also enroll in the patriot virtual academy as a Recruit, if they were so inclined.

Patriot Recruits were those who wanted to learn about the Compact and who were committed to help "spread the word" to restore the Compact to its full force.

Patriot Recruits would be licensed to bear the Patriot Corps name and to use its informational tools to spread the message of liberty far and wide.

The patriot virtual academy would be all about teaching to fight in the trenches—its primary goal to give Recruits their best shot at success.

Patriot Recruits, if they wished to earn commissions on any recruiting activities they may wish to take part of, would be licensed as independent contractors, as part of spreading the word. In that way, they would be part of something bigger, but yet they could also grow their own independent company and be in better control of their own destiny.

This dual alliance, of separate parts working together as a loose-knit but well-functioning whole, intentionally imitated the individual franchises who joined the United Franchises for their mutual benefit.

The goal of the Patriot Corps would be to decentralize its education process and disseminate as much information as possible down to every last man, woman and child interested.

If the Patriot Corps was ever targeted and taken down, Recruits—as independent individuals or separate companies—could continue to thrive on their own, if need be.

The Patriot Corps would work toward Recruits eventually going their own way, whenever Recruits thought it was in their best interests.

It would be the Corps' duty to remain relevant so that Recruits would have a reason to stick around.

While working together, the Patriot Corps would seek to offer Recruits information and successful methods for teaching about The Peculiar Conundrum, while providing generous compensation packages based upon their success.

Recruits could earn 50% commissions on Patriot Corps memberships they signed, 75% commissions on Recruit admissions fees, and would personally keep 100% of all donations made to them.

Membership fees and Recruit admissions fees applied not only to new members and new Recruits, but also to all renewals, earning the Recruits residual income that could grow over time.

The Patriot Corps would need funds to operate and grow, of course, and supporters were free to donate directly to it. Brandon, however, was of the opinion that the future success of the Patriot Corps was directly tied to the success of its Recruits.

Thus, donors would be encouraged to donate directly to the individual Recruit who helped the donor learn about Restoring Our American Republic.

That way, overhead would be minimized while most donations found their way directly to the trenches.

With this structure, Recruits could possibly align their fight for liberty with paychecks to help them cover living expenses.

Even if the paychecks were small, at least there would be a structure in place to allow for the opportunity to make fighting for liberty *pay*, instead of it always being only an expense.

Brandon's motive was to couple the profit motive with the quest to restore liberty, to turn the problem of a wayward country into an opportunity that the free market could help resolve.

Coupling profit and freedom together would be Brandon's gift to sports authority transparency and the restoration of soccer.

Hearing the plan in-depth for the first time, Conner asked, "Dad, do you really think anyone will donate money to the *for-profit* Patriot Corps or donate to Recruits who would also be 'making money' off curing the disease? Donors won't be able to deduct their donations from their taxes, after all."

“In election seasons, in the race to elect a Sports Commissioner, General Managers and Head Coaches, billions of dollars are donated to get particular people elected,” Brandon asserted confidently. “Those funds aren’t deductible, either, but billions are donated without a spectacular amount of effort.

“There is no reason why we couldn’t tap into the smallest of slices of those funds, including the billions of dollars donated separately to political action committees, which also cannot be deducted from income taxes.

“After all, filling legislative seats and executive positions within a majority-rule democracy of absolute power is a fool’s errand that provides nothing of lasting value to anyone truly interested in liberty.

“Our tactic is so much better than that. It will actually restore our Constitutional Republic of *limited* powers, where officials and members of Management may only exercise those means necessary and proper for pursuing enumerated ends.

“The bottom line is that Aminicans will spend their hard-earned money whenever and wherever they perceive greater value than keeping it.

“Investing a small portion of their wealth in liberty-minded Recruits could very well pay huge dividends someday.

“Just think of the economic stimulus Aminica will receive once fully restored to her founding principles.

“Imagine the place Aminica would be today if a decade ago, a generation ago, or a hundred years ago, this information had been made public.

“The course of history would have been irrevocably altered. It would be impossible to even begin to think of the positive changes that would have already taken place.

“Recruits only have to show donors the inherent value of our message, offering our unique means to a loosely structured collective effort to get real and lasting results.

“There is no harm trying to couple together profits with fighting for freedom. If it doesn’t work, no one will be much worse for the wear, and a good deal of information will have undoubtedly been disseminated.

“Donations to the Patriot Corps or Recruits are so much better than throwing good money down the rat hole of elections, where one may only choose the lesser of multiple evils working with unlimited powers.

“If Recruits could earn a little money in appreciation along the way, maybe a few of them will be able to spend more time spreading the message.

“Perhaps, some of them may even be able to make the jump from being Part-Time Patriots to Full-Time Freedom Fighters.

“Our opponents will undoubtedly make a big deal about the Patriot Corps being a ‘for-profit’ enterprise, but they hate profit and free enterprise anyway. People interested in our message won’t pay much attention to those attacks, if we do our job correctly.

“I am of the mindset that there is no such thing as bad press; it is all exposure. Every bit of press exposure is good, even if it is a one-sided hatchet job against us in every way, as long as they spell the Patriot Corps name correctly.

“We’ll take every mention of the Patriot Corps we can get, even if it is laden with heavy criticism and cutting remarks.

“We will know the Patriot Corps is finally making real headway when the attacks become harsh and the lies outlandish.

“When supposedly-respectable news sources who support the status quo resort to desperate tactics used by supermarket tabloids, some of their readers will undoubtedly become curious wondering why we are being attacked with such venom.

“Readers will smell desperation in the air, curious to discover the underlying story. Those will be the readers *we hadn’t ever reached before*.

“That ninety-nine readers of that particular media source will hate us for every one that has some interest doesn’t necessarily concern us. We do not care about the opposition; we only care about our growing exposure *to those most likely to listen*.

“Harsh media attacks by our opponents will also indirectly put us on the radar of alternate media sources who may be interested in our message but hadn’t yet heard of us. Follow up stories in those sources will provide the Patriot Corps an opportunity to finally get out its story, extending our message far and wide.

“Our worst nightmare will be no press. Continued silence will be our only lasting failure.

“The moral of the story is that we need to make ourselves impossible to ignore. It can all be great fun. Let’s help these seemingly omnipotent tyrants discover their actual impotence.”

The weekend was coming to a close; things were coming together quite nicely.

Summing up their efforts, Darren said, “We all know what we must do. We must seek the truth as we speak the truth, for the truth shall set us free!”

“Exactly!” Brandon said. “God Bless Aminica!”

Lauren spoke up. “I see so many people like me, who are really interested in making things better, but haven’t done much beyond voting because we didn’t know what to do.

“So many of us got burned out on party politics long ago. We haven’t shown up lately because we didn’t like what we saw. We wanted no part of all the slime and corruption we saw at every juncture.

“I am finally learning how to move beyond a majority-rule democracy and enforce the constraints of a Constitutional Republic of truly limited powers.

“Once people begin to understand what is transpiring under their very noses, I am confident slumbering patriots will awaken, boldly confident and ready to fight the good fight.

“I thank the Lord you gentlemen refused to give up and give in.

“You inspired me to discover my voice and my strength. Evil has had its wicked way for far too long.

“I vow to do my part to restore this proud country back onto her firm foundation, standing on eternal principles I feared were forever lost.

“God Bless Aminica, Land of Liberty that I Love.”

The End

Allegorical Aids

Book Term. Explanation or Real-life Equivalent.

1765 Ticket Tax. 1765 Stamp Tax/Stamp Act.

1791 Cashier's Opinion. Alexander Hamilton's
1791 Opinion on the Constitutionality of the
(first) bank of the United States.

1803 Ruling. *Marbury v. Madison* (5 U.S. 137).

1819 Ruling. *McCulloch v. Maryland* (17 U.S. 316).

1821 Ruling. *Cohens v. Virginia* (19 U.S. 264 @ 424).

Addendum/Addenda. Amendment/Amendments.

Aminica. *Pronounced:* ă mĭ nĭ' kă.

Land where power to support the play of games
is separated from the power to change the rules
of the game.

Nominally, the United States of America.

Assistant Coaches. Congressional staff.

Baseball. A governing power rightfully reserved to
the States.

Basketball. A governing power rightfully reserved to
the States.

Beaumont. Great Britain.

Beaumont League Club. Parliament.

Bill of Sports Rights. Bill of Rights. First 10 Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Cashier/Head Cashier. Secretary of the Treasury (first: Alexander Hamilton).

Compact (franchise or United Franchises). Constitution—State or U.S. (as specified in use).

Commissioner/Sports Commissioner. President of the United States (first: George Washington).

Chief Security Officer. Attorney General (first: Edmund Randolph).

Conversion of the Game of Soccer to Football.

Converting the game of Soccer to that of Football points to Referee rulings ostensibly changing the rules of the game through “reinterpretation.”

Nominally, Supreme Court “reinterpretation” of the U.S. Constitution apart from strict construction (acting only under the authority for the District of Columbia).

Corruption. Where those empowered to support the game are also able to change the rules (see also, “Oppression”).

District Seat/District of Colivera. District of Columbia.

Executive. State Governor.

First Rulebook. U.S. Constitution (*other than* Article I, Section 8, Clause 17).

Football—Old World. Governing power exercised with absolute discretion; where those who support the game also create the rules of play.

Football—franchise. Governing power rightfully reserved to the States.

Football—United Franchises. Corrupt, oppressive power exercised with absolute discretion, where those who support the game also create the rules of play (primarily through “reinterpretation” of existing rules of the game).

Nominally, any federal activity occurring under the authority for the District of Columbia which is falsely asserted to be for the whole Union.

Franchises. States.

Freedom Proclamation. Declaration of Independence.

General Manager. U.S. Senator.

Head Coach. U.S. Representative.

Local Soccer Games. Children’s soccer games.

Nominally, formal instruction of the young about the U.S. Constitution and the founding principles of the United States of America (strict construction).

Management (consisting of General Managers and Head Coaches). Congress (consisting of U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives)

Maringo. Maryland.

Old World. Europe.

Oppression. Where those empowered to support the game are also able to change the rules (see also, “Corruption”).

Prescott. Pennsylvania.

Referees. Supreme Court Justices.

Rules. Laws.

Second Rulebook. Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 of the U.S. Constitution.

Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Secretary of State (first: Thomas Jefferson).

Soccer. Game played where those who support the play of the game may not change the rules.

Nominally strict Federal Powers.

Sports Authority. Governing Power.

South Coronado. South Carolina.

The Soccer Rulebook. The Constitution for the United States of America.

Ticket Tax. 1765 Stamp Tax/Stamp Act.

Token Booths. First and second banks of the United States (1791-1811; 1816-1836).

United Franchises of Aminica. United States of America.

Notes:

The history of the Old World—outside of the 1766 Declaratory Act and its vital ramifications—does not necessarily follow the actual history of Europe. Some unimportant facts and/or minor principles have been changed or ignored for the sake of additional clarity of the fictional story line.

Also, the **Pedestrian** and **Dexterity Parties** do not follow the actual history nor particular tactics of any political party (Republican, Democrat, or otherwise).

Their use and reference herein is only meant to provide a general reference to non-descript political party activities in context with the fictional story line.

About the Author:



Matt Erickson, past-proprietor of several failed businesses, is an office clerk. He lives in Moses Lake, Washington with his wife, Pam. He has two step-kids and eight grandchildren.

Erickson is the founder and president of the Patriot Corps and the Foundation For Liberty, the latter of which is an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt organization.



For more information understanding the concepts discussed in *The Peculiar Conundrum*, please see the following public domain books by Matt Erickson which may be freely downloaded at the following websites (please see www.PatriotCorps.org for printed books):

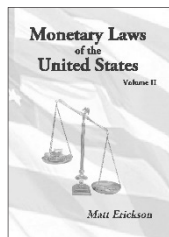
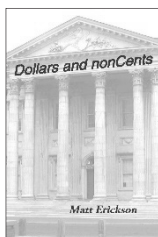
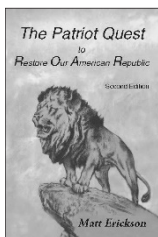
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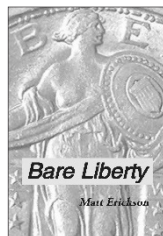
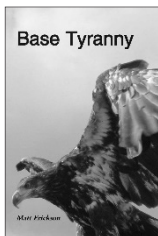
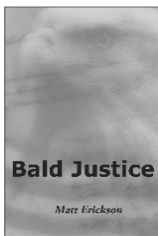
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Envision for a moment, the following nonsensical sportscast:

“Only seventeen seconds remain on the clock as we near the end of the sixth inning. The soccer ball is caught by Right End Tom King, only 9 yards from home plate.

“To keep from being called for ‘Traveling,’ King dribbles the ball but still manages to get past the Goalie without being tackled. Moments later he slam-dunks the ball through the basket to score a touchdown and the Cattails win the game.”

It wouldn’t take much of a sports enthusiast to realize something was strangely amiss with this “game,” as the rules and terms from soccer, baseball, basketball and football were all intermixed into one bewildering event.

And, with millions of die-hard sports fans across America who intricately know every rule and regulation of their favored sport, there is about zero chance any huckster would succeed in passing this off as a legitimate game.

But, replace the game with politics, law and government, and tragically the most sacred of our country’s founding legal and moral principles may be substituted by their polar opposites with nothing but the weak objections of a few government watchdogs.

That our written Constitution seems less-fixed than the rules of sports undoubtedly has a great deal to do with the widespread difference of understanding between the two.

Given that the average American understands the rules of sports far better than of government, it will ultimately prove easier to show how important governing principles have been cleverly circumvented if a story is told where complicated legal principles are substituted with simple rules of sports.

The Peculiar Conundrum is a sports allegory that lays bare two centuries of government nonsense. It exposes the odd phenomenon of members of Congress and federal officials seemingly acting contrary to founding principles with impunity, so we may finally end the methodical push toward absolute tyranny.